Experiences of Partners of Male Prisoners

by

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Abstract

The consequences of imprisonment are felt not only by prisoners themselves but also their family members. Prisoners may be alone in a cell or on trial but most have families and friends that often feel as though they are imprisoned along with their loved ones. There is a limited body of research conducted on partners of incarcerated men and the far-reaching effects of imprisonment on these secondary victims within the Canadian context. However, the research that is available suggests that families face many difficulties when one of its members is incarcerated. This study explores the experiences of female partners of incarcerated men. Crisis Theory directs qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews with ten women. The results indicate that women whose male partners are incarcerated experience many difficulties including stigmatization, financial barriers and emotional stresses. The findings not only highlight the difficulties female partners of male prisoners face but suggest some effective coping mechanisms that the women use to endure such difficulties. This research serves as an exploratory work for larger works that can provide basic policy recommendations.

Key Terms: prisoners' partners, crisis theory, families, effects of incarceration

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support has been out of this world and I only hope that one day I will be able to follow their example and pay it forward.

Table of Content

This thesis explores the experiences of prisoner's female partners within a crisis theory framework. As a context for the theoretical framework I will provide a literature review of the history of crisis theory, its ambiguities and definitional problems. Such a review permits me to argue that the definition of crisis provided by Hill (1949) is the ideal theoretical model to use for exploring the experiences of incarcerated partners. Hill's theory guides the use of qualitative interviews with women who have either had a male partner incarcerated or have a male partner incarcerated. This thesis is an attempt to bring to light the experiences of male prisoners' partners and the effects that the correctional system has on family members of those who are incarcerated.

Family members of those who are incarcerated are greatly affected by current trends within the correctional system. Shifts in public views from rehabilitative to more punitive stances impact families that are associated with incarcerated individuals. Thus, it is important to understand correctional trends to effectively understand how families are victimized by incarceration.

Prisons and Prison Rates

It was not until the 1930s that reformation was given any consideration within the Canadian correctional system (Griffith, 1988, p.53). During this time programs were developed to help rehabilitate offenders. However, the "nothing works" attitude soon emerged and the burden was placed back on the offender to enter programs and to take responsibility for their own behavior instead of placing blame on some disorder or socio-economic condition (Griffith, 1988). During the 1950s and 1960s probation gained more

popularity when illusions about the benefits of incarceration began to fade (Cellard, 2000, p.22). During the 1970s the human rights movement emerged and debates began about social discrimination (Cornwell, 2006, p.22). In 1976 the death penalty in Canada was abolished and was replaced by life sentences which carry a twenty-five year minimum term of confinement before parole eligibility (Griffith, 1988, p.56).

Since the 1970s there has been yet another shift towards a less rehabilitative policy with more emphasis on punishment and offender responsibility along with increased attention to victims of crime (Griffith, 1988, p.54). This shift has resulted in tension between the federal and provincial jurisdictions because of the lack of funding available to maintain correctional facilities and fund victims of crime programs.

Canada's rates of incarceration have remained fairly steady. The United States, however, saw a 510 percent increase in the number of incarcerated drug offenders in the decade between 1990-2000 (Browning, Miller & Spruance, 2001, p.88). Though Canada's incarceration rate has not increased to this degree, they are still higher than many other countries (Torrance, 1997). African American and Aboriginal men tend to be over represented both in Canada and the U.S. In 2005/06 Aboriginals in Canadian prisons accounted for twenty four percent of the provincial/territorial admissions to custody and eighteen percent of federal admissions, but they only made up four percent of the Canadian population (Landry & Sinha, 2006, p. 6).

In 2005/06 there were over 232,800 adults admitted to some form of custody in Canada, which represents a four percent increase from the previous year (Landry & Sinha, 2006, p. 1). Most of these admissions were in the provincial system, mainly by

those who were on remand/pre-trial detention. The federal incarceration rate rose but the provincial rate stayed fairly consistent. Most incarcerated offenders are non violent and the time served is short. Adults in custody are most often male and between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four. The portion of women that are incarcerated is relatively small (Landry & Sinha, 2006). In Canada, unlike the U.S, the number of women has not increased.

Research shows that the high incarceration rates are not entirely due to an increase in crime rates. Actually, crime rates in many countries have remained steady or even declined (Walmsley, 2003). Many experts assert that the high prison population is due to societal preference for prison as punishment over the alternative (Walmsley, 2003). In addition to crime rates dropping, the severity of the crimes has also continued to decline (Wallace, 2009).

All types of crime in the future are expected to decrease in part due to the aging population of Canadians (Carrington, 2001). In the 1960s when the baby boomers were in their late teens crime rates rose and then fell as this population grew older (Carrington, 2001). The relationship between age and crime is an age-old criminological fact and is widely accepted and holds true across all social and cultural conditions (Carrington, 2001).

Prisoners' Families

One of the reasons for concern about the incarceration rates in Canada and around the world are the far reaching negative effects of imprisonment. The consequences of imprisonment are felt not only by those who are incarcerated but also by the families and

loved ones that are left behind. There is a limited amount of research examining the effects of incarceration and the burden that is placed on families in the Canadian context. While there is more research conducted in the US on this issue it is nevertheless exploratory, its focus tends to be narrow and is dated.

The first studies conducted on prisoners' families were by Bloodgood in 1928 and Sacks in 1938 (Ferraro, Johnson, Jorgensen, & Bolton, 1983). Both studies focused on financial difficulties and adjustment (Ferraro et al., 1983). Bloodgood (1928) determined that families experienced financial hardship as a result of the incarceration of the primary breadwinner (as cited in Hannem, 2003). Sacks found that the lack of communication between families, correctional officials and community social services contributed to adjustment difficulties and lack of assistance (as cited in Hannem, 2003). One of the largest studies to date was conducted in 1965 by Morris in England. She interviewed 825 imprisoned men and 469 of their wives (Murray, 2005). Morris concentrated on difficulties experienced by prisoners' families and found that financial problems, loneliness and childrearing were the most prevalent problems (Murray, 2005).

In 1965 Anderson conducted a study in Australia aimed at determining the need for community services geared towards this population. She found that most services were offered in the form of financial aid and welfare and very few offered any form of counseling or programming (Anderson, 1965). In 1976 Schneller argued that imprisonment of married men violated the principle of specificity of punishment by causing hardship to family members that are legally innocent (Schneller, 1976)). He recommended increasing family counseling, visiting privileges and conjugal visits in order to maintain contact and reduce emotional stress (Schneller, 1976). In the early

1980s, TARP (Transitional Aid to Released Prisoners) conducted an experiment on the impact of returning prisoners on their families and found that returning prisoners often drew on already scarce family resources and were often unable to obtain employment or otherwise contribute to the family (as cited in Hannem, 2003).

In 1990 Fisherman published the largest study since Morris in 1965 - *Women at the Wall: A Study of Prisoners' Wives Doing Time on the Outside*. Fisherman explored the experiences in dealing with the separation. She found that financial difficulties, emotional stress, family readjustment, lack of resources and social stigma emerged as major themes (Fisherman, 1990).

What all these studies have in common is that they were conducted somewhere other than Canada. There is a significant gap in the Canadian literature surrounding the topic of women with an incarcerated partner. Only two studies were found to be conducted in Canada on the topic. The first was by the Canadian Families and Corrections Network in Kingston, Ontario in cooperation with the Correctional Service of Canada published in 2003 (as cited by Hannem, 2003). The report suggested the need for correctional officials to interact with family members and to be sensitive to the needs of families and the need to integrate families more fully into release and reintegration planning. However, it has been argued the findings from this study lacked theoretical or contextual analysis (Hannem, 2003). The second study was conducted by Hannem in 2003. She found that families experienced financial and emotional hardships due to the partner's incarceration and those families were often stigmatized and isolated from the community (Hannem, 2003). However, this study focused primarily on stigmatization and neither study looked at the experiences of families through a crisis theory lens.

While some women may experience major hardships, not all experience the same difficulties in the same intensity and to the same degree. Some women may even get relief when a partner is incarcerated (Comfort, 2007). Hardships and difficulties often depend on the pre incarceration family dynamic. For example, if the partner is unemployed or has a drug addiction, the experience may be very different from that of a woman whose partner was a provider of financial and emotional support.

Economic difficulties may be severe for partners who are left behind. Studies suggest that many women lack basic necessities such as shelter, food and clothing and some report having to receive help from the state, family members or other relatives (Anderson, 1966; Carlson & Cervera, 1992; Comfort et al, 2005; Daniel & Barrett, 1981; Fishman, 1990). Many women are forced to move in with family as men tend to be the primary breadwinners (Daniel & Barrett, 1981). Even when the men are not co-habitants, they often contribute to the household in the form of child care and social support, buying toys and diapers or providing babysitting services (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999).

In addition to keeping up with daily household expenses women may experience the burden of paying legal fees and maintaining contact (Christian, 2001; Daniel & Barrett, 1981; Schneller, 1976). Often prisons are located in remote areas away from the city centers making visitation both time consuming and expensive. Women often report needing money for travel expenses and car repairs, making keeping in contact difficult (Grinstead, 2001; Shollenberger, 2009).

Like the offenders themselves, partners and family members can often experience stigmatization and feel a sense of shame in their interactions with friends, family

members and their communities (Anderson, 1966; Fisherman, 1990). A woman who feels shame will often withdraw from society in order to avoid discussing her partners' incarceration (Anderson, 1966; Carlson & Cervera, 1992; Daniel and Barrett, 1981). When the offender's criminal acts receive public attention, the feeling of embarrassment increases for family members (Fisherman, 1990). However, studies have suggested that those who receive more support from the outside world cope more effectively with the stigma than those who do not receive such support (Carlson & Cervera, 1992).

It is evident that the incarceration of a partner requires that a woman learns to cope on many fronts and with many new realities. Coping has been defined as "a specific effort by which an individual attempts to reduce or manage a demand on the family system" (Carlson & Cervera, 1992, p. 21). Coping helps families to restore balance. It has been suggested that involvement with religion, formal mutual support groups, shorter sentences, contact with the offender, previous contact with the criminal justice system, higher education, having older children, and being skilled at child rearing all help women to actively cope better with their partner's incarceration (Carlson & Cervera, 1992; Fisherman, 1990).

Existing research clearly shows that women whose partners are incarcerated face multiple difficulties. As stated, these difficulties may include financial issues, the stigma of having an incarcerated partner, the management of children and obstacles to visiting with inmates (Anderson, 1966; Daniel and Barrett, 1981; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; King, 2004). Thus, it is possible that the incarceration becomes a crisis due to the combined stress of several issues.

When a man returns home the woman will have to adapt to her new lifestyle and possibly her partner's changed attitude. Often women have mixed feelings about their partner's return (Fisherman, 1990). Fisherman (1990) found that most women were eager for their husband's return and believed that he would stay out of trouble. However, some women had concerns about their relationship and felt like strangers upon the return of their spouses. The women worried about how their partner might disrupt the life that they had built in his absence. According to Fisherman (1990) most couples, upon the partner's return, were happy but also felt pressure and shock from the change in family dynamics. Most families resumed some old patterns while also incorporating new ones, and most women established new forms of cooperation within their relationship.

Crisis Theory and Prisoners' Families: A Theoretical Framework

Incarceration can become a crisis for the family because of the involuntary separation it creates and the severe impact it has on the functioning of the family unit. Crisis theory has been used to study such phenomenon as war, women in the labour force and incarceration. Crisis theory is an appropriate vehicle in which to understand the experiences of prisoners' partners. The experiences of prisoners' wives in relation to crisis theory have previously been studied by Anderson (1966), Carlson and Cervera (2001), Daniel and Barrett (1981) and Fisherman (1990). In 1949 Hill defined crisis as a stressor event in which old coping mechanisms no longer work and new routine is required (Hill, 1971).

Hill's theory involves four phases. The first phase is a stressor event which, in this case, would be the initial incarceration and separation. The second phase is the

disorganization phase, which would be the hardships experiences by women. The third phase is a recovery or coping phase in which coping mechanisms and new routines are established. The final phase is the reorganization phase where women adapt to their new routine.

Prisoners' Partners: A Canadian Context

Within the Canadian context research on this topic is scarce and the families of the incarcerated are still largely ignored in academia. Research that is available is limited and dated and a very small group of academics have looked at this group in relation to crisis theory. Although one could expect some cross-national generalizations, Hannem (2003) argues that there are distinct reasons to study this topic in a Canadian context.

First, the relative dispersal of the Canadian population and the centralized federal government makes Canada unique. In the United States the individual states are responsible for the administration of courts and prisoners and the increase in private prisons contribute to the relative accessibility of prisons. For example, the state of New York has seventy state correctional facilities alone (not including local county jails) (NYS Department of Correctional Services, 2008 as cite in Hannem, 2003, p.20). Canada has forty-nine federal correctional institutions across a nation that is seventy-five times the size of New York State (Hannem, 2003, p.20). In Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and the three northern territories there is not one federal prison (Hannem, 2003). Thus, it could be suspected that families of those who are incarcerated in Canada are disproportionately affected by the burden to maintain contact.

Secondly, Canadians seem to think that our system is viewed as a rehabilitative one and takes a soft approach in comparison to our neighbouring country. Consequently, Canadians are beginning to believe that our prison system is not tough enough and that we need a law and order approach (Hannem, 2003). In recent years we have heard the call for mandatory minimum sentences, the abolition of parole and statutory release, longer sentences and fewer "luxuries". During the federal elections of 2006 and 2008, all three nationally represented parties included a "get tough on crime" approach in their platforms appealing to the general public (Hannem, 2010). It seems that Canada may be at a turning point and heading toward an American-style approach. This shift decreases expenditures for any programming that may appear to be "soft on crime" lessening the funding for programs aimed at helping the loved ones of offenders.

My thesis attempts to look at the experiences of prisoners' partners in Canada. I used crisis theory as a framework by which to understand these experiences. I investigated the difficulties women faced while their male partners were incarcerated. Additionally, I attempted to understand what coping mechanisms were useful and what coping mechanisms may have been useful had they been available.

This study is limited to female partners of the male incarcerated population because the prison population is primarily male. I included both the federal and provincial systems in order to obtain sufficient data as these women proved to be a difficult population to reach. Rittenhouse and John Howard Society, both organization located in Toronto, Ontario, agreed to allow access to their clients in order to facilitate this research. Semi structured interviews were conducted on ten prisoners' partners to explore the lived experiences of the female partners of incarcerated men.

Literature Review

In this chapter I will place the theoretical framework for this research and give a detailed account of the literature on the topic and its relation to crisis theory. First, I describe the history of crisis theory and some of the pioneers, outlining some of the main problems with the theory. There is ambiguity when it comes to crisis theory definitions and concepts. The term crisis is typically used rather loosely (Caplan, 1960; Farber, 1960; Hill, 1971; Koos, 1950; Lindermann, 1961; Waller, 1988). Then I will outlined Hill's (1949) crisis theory and argue that his model should be used to examine partners of prisoners and that it minimizes inconsistencies found in other models. I also outline previous literature on families of prisoners and argue that the lack of attention given to this group may contribute to the negative effects of incarceration that are experienced by prisoners' families. This thesis suggests that the experiences of incarcerated partners should be viewed through the lens of crisis and coping as it provides the best framework in which to explore women's lived experiences and the difficulties precipitated by a partner's absence.

Crisis Theory's Early History

Models of family stress and coping originated in the 1940s (Carlson & Cervera, 1992). One of the crisis theory pioneers, Lindemann (1944), explored crisis and stages of acute grief. He studied the bereavement of family members of victims who died in the Coconut Grove Night Club fire in 1942. There is a consensus in the field that Lindermann's (1966) work formed the foundation for crisis theory and crisis intervention, even though he never directly referred to his process as a crisis theory (Darbonne, 1967).

Many subsequent theorists cited Lindemann as being responsible for its germination (Darbonne, 1967). Researchers would later explore the disorganization, adjustment and reorganization process that occurs during a crisis event labeling their theoretical propositions as "crisis theory".

Lindemann asserted that intervention at any stage of the grief process could help individuals cope through the remainder of the process (as cited in Darbonne, 1967). The first stage of grief, according to Lindemann (1944), is somatic distress where the griever feels a lack of strength, exhaustion and has digestive symptoms such as a lack of taste. The second stage is preoccupation with the image of the deceased. At this stage it is common for the griever to visualize the deceased and experience loss of reality. Lindemann (1944) argued that this is a crucial stage because this grief reaction can make individuals feel less in touch with reality and approaching insanity. The third stage is guilt when the bereaved searches through the last interactions with the deceased and finds evidence of failure (Lindermann, 1944). In the fourth stage, the griever loses touch with others and can become irritable and angry. The last stage in Lindemann's grieving process is activity change. The griever finds that his or her activities throughout the day change and there is an inability to remain organized. At this stage the griever clings to routine but these routines are carried out with extreme effort (Lindemann, 1944). The final result, according the Lindemann, is the readjustment of the environment and the reformulation of routines and activities (Lindemann, 1944).

In conclusion, Lindemann (1944) writes that his definition and process of acute grief is not limited to those who have experienced death. He adds that those going through a separation, for example the families of those going off to war, can also

experience the trauma of acute grief. However, not everyone facing a crisis event experiences acute grief (Lindemann, 1944). A limitation of Lindemann's definition of crisis theory is its focuses on crisis instead of recovery process. As a result it is hard to measure and apply his theory to a variety of different characteristics.

In 1948, Caplan, like Lindemann, identified stages in the crisis process. He often refers to crisis theory based on the concept of homeostasis (a stable state) (as cited in Darbonne, 1967). According to Caplan the first stage includes a rise in tension that summons the homeostatic habitual problem solving skills. The second stage shows a further increase in tension. In the third stage the tension reaches a peek where internal and external resources are needed. The final stage follows when the problem is not solved. In this case a major disorganization or emotional break may occur (as cited in Darbonne, 1967). Caplan indicated a time frame, arguing that the whole process lasts for four to six weeks (as cited in Darbonne, 1967).

The crisis will start to decrease in intensity as coping techniques are used and the crisis in newly defined. The limitation in Caplan's interpretation of crisis theory is that there is no way of measuring a constant rise in tension. He identifies the process but does not identify a measurement tool. However, in Caplan's version of crisis theory we start to see the stages become more broadly defined and become a theory that is applicable to different circumstances.

Erik Erikson was another significant figure in the development of crisis theory. In 1950 Erikson agreed with Lindemann's stages in a crisis event, but Erikson argued that the stages are related to each other and each stage depends on the success of resolving the previous stages (as cited in Turner & Avison, 1992). Erikson described this as building

blocks; those who are successful in resolving previous crisis stages have solutions to future crisis situations (as cited in Turner & Avison, 1992). According to Erikson the term resolution does not mean that the crisis is over; rather, it refers to making a positive decision or settling on a solution to a particular event (Turner & Avison, 1992). According to this definition, the person will emerge from the crisis with new skills and coping mechanisms to deal with future problems and increasing the probability of success.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the idea that crisis situations help build future coping mechanisms was widely accepted (Turner & Avison, 1992). Crisis theorists argued that even in extremely profound events there are some positive aspects of crisis. During a crisis situation certain adaptations are put into place, which in turn help the individual deal with other extreme situations that may have otherwise crippled the family (Turner & Avison, 1992).

One important problem with crisis theory lies in the definition of crisis and its classification. Farber (1960) argues that a crisis is a process rather than an event. When defined as a process, crisis can then be measured empirically. Many theorists have attempted to develop crisis theory as a process (Anderson, 1966: Bloom, 1963; Halpern, 1973). However, independent measures of hardship are hard to obtain.

In 1963 Bloom became one of the first to look to defining a measurable definition of crisis theory (as cited in Halpern, 1973). Bloom suggests that testing a hypothesis about crisis theory first requires a differentiation between non-crisis and crisis situations. Bloom set out to establish the definition of a crisis through a consensus of highly skilled

clinicians (as cited in Halpern, 1973). He designed fourteen detailed cases and asked the clinicians to pick out the crisis situations. Only in five of the fourteen cases was there a consensus on the definition of a crisis (Halpern, 1973). The results of Bloom's study pose a problem to crisis theory. When defined as a specific event the consensus is limited and the definitions vary, in turn, making a measurable definition nearly impossible. Bloom further argues that one should be able to distinguish between those experiencing a crisis and those who are not based on their behavior, not the event (Halpern, 1973).

In 1973, Halpern attempted to expand on Bloom's idea and created concrete measures of crisis by testing for crisis-type behavior. Halpern hypothesized that crisis behaviour would occur in individuals in crisis situations more significantly than in individuals in non-crisis situations (Halpern, 1973). The subjects were chosen from four different types of crisis situations. The first situation was a comparison of those involved in a divorce with those in marriages. The second situation was a comparison of students in personal crisis that had applied for aid at a student mental health center with students in an introductory psychology course. The third situation was a comparison of newly admitted patients to the Lincoln Regional Center (public health institution) to patients in the center for three months. Finally, the fourth situation was a comparison of people in a state of bereavement compared to those who were not (Halpern, 1973). The subjects in these situations were asked to describe their feelings in comparison to their feelings in the past based on ten emotions. The ten feelings were; feelings of tiredness and exhaustion, helplessness, inadequacy, confusion, physical symptoms, anxiety, disorganization of functioning in work relationships, disorganization of functioning in family relationships, disorganization of functioning in social relationship and disorganization in social

activities (Halpern, 1973) . Halpern (1973) found that those who were described as being in a crisis situation also experienced crisis behaviour more frequently. This is significant because it supports the idea that those in crisis situations, like the partners of incarcerated individuals, are more likely to experience what is defined as crisis behaviour.

A review of the research conducted by crisis theory pioneers' allows us to identify three common themes. Most theories identify a normal state prior to the crisis event, followed by a stressful or unstable state, culminating in a recovery or adjustment phase. These common themes form the foundation of crisis theory. Unfortunately, some definitions of crisis theory can only be applied to very specific situations. Hill's definition, however, has been used in many studies previously and is the closest to a working definition of crisis theory. Hill proposes four phases of crisis and allows for the consistent measurement of these phases thus eliminating the inconsistencies that exist in other versions of crisis theory. A review of Hill's definition of crisis theory will elucidate how it is an ideal framework to guide a study on the experiences of women who have incarcerated partners.

Hill's Crisis Theory and the Imprisonment of a Partner as Crisis

Hill (1971) proposes that all families experience worry, trouble, insecurities and problems. He suggests, however, that crisis refers to the big jolts that are not anticipated and which challenge daily life (Hill, 1971). Hill (1949) defined crisis as a change where old patterns are no longer adequate and new ones are required. Immediately following a crisis event, a state of disequilibrium occurs at which time the individual must find some way of coping. Subsequently, a new state of equilibrium will occur (Woolley, 1990).

Hill argues that a crisis strains the resources which families possess. Furthermore, those who have been in this situation before are less likely to define their situation as a crisis because they know what to do. Upon facing a crisis the family members may feel paralyzed. They may, at first, act as if nothing has happened. In time they will spin into a downward spiral. Eventually the family will start to reorganize the problem and develop new routine through trial and error or by planning and sacrificing (Hill, 1971).

In 1966, Anderson sought to understand what happens to a family when the husband-father is imprisoned. She sought to understand why some families experience crisis while others do not, and what factors help the prisoner's family cope with the situation (Anderson, 1966). Anderson looked at economic hardships, new roles, changed relationships and stigma. Anderson suggested that caution must be used in the generaliability of crisis theory because similar situations do not always result in a crisis reaction. Her work suggests that coping mechanisms for wives expecting to resume a marriage are not the same for those who are adjusting to permanent separation (Anderson, 1966). It also suggests that the crisis was only experienced following the first incidence of a partner's imprisonment (Anderson, 1966). This is consistent with definitions and stages which indicate that after individuals have gone through a crisis they are better equipped to deal with the same or similar situation the next time around.

Using Hill's crisis theory, those experiencing crisis can be defined as partaking in a four phase process. The first phase is the stressor event. In the case of prisoners' partners the incarceration is the stressor event. In 1965 Hill defined a stressor as a situation for which the family has had little or no prior experience or preparation (Hill, 1971). A stressor can be developed from an external event to the family such as war or

the incarceration of family members or internal family problems such as alcoholism (Carlson & Cervera, 1992). Both stressors affect the family and can, in turn, create crisis. Hill identifies two types of stressors; the first is change in the family status and the second is conflict among members over their roles (as cited Carlson & Cervera, 1992). The incarceration of a partner has the potential to cause both types of stressors.

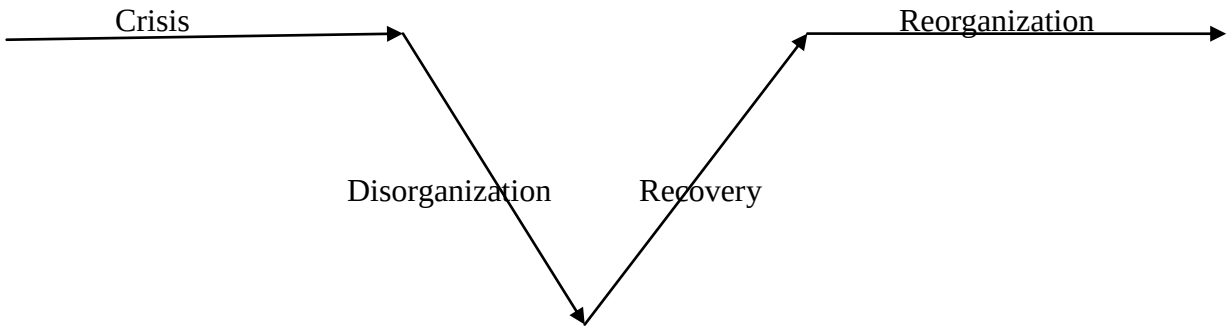
In the second phase of Hill's crisis theory a person experiences disorganization. The individual realizes that past routines are no longer workable and new actions are required (Hill, 1971). This phase may have detrimental effects on partners of incarcerated men. The woman can suffer financially, encounter stigmatization or suffer emotional hardship such as the loss of a companion or loneliness.

Third, the individual will start to recover through adaptation, coping mechanisms and role changes. In the third phase family members must reorganize their lives in order to adapt to the changed situation (Fisherman, 1990). Changes in the family structure must be immediately initiated. Decisions about whether to work, change residence or whether to apply for welfare all have to be made. At this time the women must weather the crisis and begin to pull themselves and their family's lives back together (Fisherman, 1990).

The fourth and final phase of Hill's crisis model is adjustment and reorganization. This adjustment can be with or without the incarcerated individual. Often women are forced to adapt to the change and to lead normal lives while partners are still incarcerated, making life without her partner the new norm. When the partners return home again women are forced yet again to create a normal routine with their partner (Anderson, 1966). Studies conducted in the United States show that some women are untroubled by

their husband's incarceration; for most women, however, a psychological crisis occurs (Carlson & Cervera, 1992).

Hill's Crisis Theory Diagram:



Hill's theory captures the major concepts of crisis theory, which is why the remainder of this thesis will be guided by Hill's broadly defined four phases of crisis theory. Hill's phases are ideal for framing the experiences of family members of those who are incarcerated, as illustrated by its previous application in studies of prison population. Additionally, it is one of the few crisis theories that is generalizable, captures all the elements of crisis theory and helps focus the question of what women experience when a partner is incarcerated. As such, it is the best tool to organize the findings obtained by interviewing prisoners' partners.

Difficulties Experienced by Prisoners and Their Families (Disorganization)

According to theories, such as Hill's crisis theory, the loss of a family member can result in disorganization and most women must overcome the loss and regain functional equilibrium (Lowenstein, 1984). Undoubtedly, some women remain unharmed when a loved one is incarcerated. However, very few women's lives remain unchanged when their partner is incarcerated.

Financial Difficulties

Most families experience financial loss as a result of a partner's incarceration and the financial loss can be even greater for those who try to maintain a family relationship with the offender. Ferraro, Johnson, Jorgensen & Bolton (1983) found that financial difficulties were the worse hardship for women with incarcerated partners followed by unemployment. Unfortunately, these burdens disproportionately affect families that are least able to absorb it (Chui, 2009; Hairston, 2002). Prisoners are disproportionately drawn from those with the fewest resources (Ferraro et al., 1983). It is common for prisoners' families to have to turn to public assistance. This reliance on welfare can promote feelings of disempowerment and helplessness (Chui, 2009).

In some cases prisoners are not employed prior to incarceration and have drug problems that could hinder rather than contribute to the household. Comfort (2007) found that at times the men who were incarcerated were more of a fiscal hindrance than help and provided no economic advantage for their partners. Some of the men were even reported to cause financial loss due to stolen money, belongings or vehicles, usually in connection with their drug habits (Comfort, 2007). According to Comfort (2007) the partners of these prisoners did not experience extra economic burdens and hence had no additional financial strain. Conversely, there are many studies which indicate that a significant number of women are worse off because of their partner's incarceration and that financial burdens are a major problem (Chui, 2009; Codd, 2008; Daniel & Barrett, 1981; Fisherman, 1990; Hairston, 2002; King, 1993; Schneller, 1976). According to Chui (2009) financial burdens are not only a major problem for the families of incarcerated men but they are the most salient issue.

Families may experience financial loss in different ways. For some families imprisonment means the loss of a primary caregiver (Codd, 2008). In these situations there is a lack of support and families may be reluctant to ask for help because of embarrassment and feelings of shame. In other instances debt is accumulated while a partner is incarcerated, which puts strain both on the family at home and on the prisoner (Codd, 2008). Some studies suggest that women who experience the loss of one income, are also saddled with legal fees and the costs associated with maintaining contact making it hard to make ends meet. Basic necessities such as food, clothing and housing strain the limited budget that is available (Daniel & Barrett, 1981; Hairston, 2002).

Stringer (2000) found that often debt was accumulated while a family member was imprisoned and that often families struggled to pay off the existing debt of the prisoner either because of pressure from their family, debt collectors, feelings of responsibility or to preserve joint assets (as cited in Codd, 2008). During the initial incarceration and arrest, Davis (1992) found that with family disruption, little energy was spent on worrying about finances. Energy was concentrated on locating their partners and establishing contact.

Difficulties in Maintaining Contact

Often limited resources mean the family is forced to choose between maintaining contact with the prisoner and devoting resources to the family. Even when there was no monetary contribution from the men prior to imprisonment the additional costs of visitation can reduce the woman's financial viability (Christian, 2005). Often there is the economic drain of maintaining contact with the prisoner via phone calls, visits and pressure to send and bring food, clothing etc. (Christian, 2005; Christian, Mellow &

Thomas, 2006; Light & Campbell, 2006). Families are often forced to set boundaries and in some cases this can limit contact with the offender. Thus families that stay involved with the inmate may be jeopardizing their own social and economic capital (Christian, Mellow & Thomas, 2006). In the United States, despite the increase in the prison population, there has been a decline in overall prison visits (Light & Campbell, 2006). The increased prison population results in some inmates being incarcerated in institutions that are further away from home and the burdens of the time and cost of traveling are placed on the families (Codd, 2007; Light & Campbell, 2006).

Often prisons are placed in remote areas located far away from city centers making travel costs an issue (Codd, 2007). In the United States there is a growing trend to move inmates to different states with rented cells to deal with overcrowding (Grinstead Faigeles, Bancroft & Zack, 2001). Hannem (2003) found that many women relied on Bridghouse, a non-profit organization in Kingston Ontario, which provides support and transportation for women and children with a loved one who is incarcerated. However, Bridgehouse has since been shut down due to funding cuts which further emphasizes the limited amount of consideration given to partners of the incarcerated population. Shollenberger (2005) found that fifty-nine percent of respondents reported that distance was an obstacle when visiting a loved one (p.5).

Additionally, women described a cycle of visitation, stating that sometimes the frequency of visits change because of economic and emotional resources (Christian, 2005). In a study by Daniel and Barrett (1981) it was found that ninety percent of family members needed financial help with transportation to and from the prison, whether it was

for car repairs or public transit (p.314). Some family members spend up to thirty-six percent of their earning on visitation (Grinstead, Faigeles, Bancroft & Zack, 2001, p.66).

The expense of visiting a loved one is not limited to travel. There is also the cost of snacks, overnight lodging, loss of income, child-care, gifts and in some countries health care costs (Grinstead et al, 2001). No food is allowed to be taken in from outside so family members are forced to purchase from expensive vending machines (Grinstead et al, 2001). Often women will go without a meal in order to visit their loved one (Codd, 2008).

Inmates are only permitted to call collect while in prison and these calls can be very expensive. Many women have their phone disconnected within a few months because they are unable to pay high phone bills (Braman, 2007). Hannem (2003) found a general consensus among family members that the cost of collect calls impedes their ability to maintain family contact and that the Correctional Services of Canada has given little consideration to the burden that collect calls place on prisoners' families. Although the technology is available, no one has taken the initiative to provide a cheaper means of communication for prisoners and their families (Hannem, 2003). In 2003 Corrections Canada reported that they were replacing the existing phone service with a system that allowed families the same long distance charges as enjoyed by the general population. In 2006 it was said that these changes would be implemented very soon (Hannem, 2010). In 2011 these changes have still not been made.

Despite this burden, in a study conducted by Carlson and Cervera (1992), virtually all inmates interviewed reported receiving telephone calls from their wives. Sixty-four percent reported phone conversations more than once a week. The majority of

inmates reported that telephone conversations had a positive effect on their family relationship (Carlson & Cervera, 1992).

In a study conducted by Chui (2009) families indicated their appreciated any communication but felt that they could not reveal intimate feelings or secrets because they feared that correctional staff might hear or read what they were saying or writing. The visits are often not relaxed and can be emotionally painful (Arditti, 2003; Light & Campbell, 2006). Due to the limited time and the family not wanting to upset the prisoner, often issues and problems remain unresolved and even unmentioned (Light & Campbell, 2006).

Another communication barrier may be literacy. Some women communicate with partners through written letters. However, this is nearly impossible if one or both partners cannot read or write. A number of partners in Chui's (2009) study did not write their husbands because of literacy problems, having never received a formal education.

Information Barriers

For most women, when their partner is incarcerated, obtaining relevant information about the system is an important step (Daniel & Barrett, 1981). Issues concerning where her partner will be held, for how long, rules and information about visitation are all information that a woman needs to know. Accessing information about the prisoners' welfare can be stressful and difficult, especially as families are unable to contact prisoners directly by telephone (Loucks, 2004).

Unfortunately, there is no consistent way to obtain this information and the lack of knowledge about the system can create challenges. Without this information a

woman is unable to obtain a clear picture of her situation and come up with a workable solution to the crisis (Daniel & Barrett, 1981). Information is not generally available through handbooks or public websites and what is available is usually outdated and not clear. So women resort to conversations with other families for information (Hairston, 2002).

Daniel and Barrett (1981) argue that a lack of resources and information can turn a woman's situation from a problem to a crisis. To further exacerbate the problem, the lack of information means that the women have fewer resources and organizations to turn to for support. In a study by VACRO (2000) it was clear that women wanted information about support services. In the absence of their partners women sought advice on budgeting, depression, drugs, domestic violence and child development (Loucks, 2004)).

Daniel and Barrett (1981) found that ninety percent of women needed more information about weekend furloughs and parole, seventy percent needed more information regarding rules concerning letters and visitation, sixty-five percent needed information about the length of sentence and twenty percent needed more information about community support and services that were available (p.316).

Difficulties Associated with Stress, Shame and Stigmatization

In studies of the impact of incarceration on family members, some of the major causes of crisis included stress, stigmatization and shame. A family member's incarceration often elicits feelings of shame and anger (Braman, 2007, Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999, Hannem, 2003). Research on stigmatization reveals that individuals are conscious of their discredited status (Hannem, 2003). Families are often assumed to be

guilty by association and many family members try to keep the incarceration a secret from family and friends. Hannem (2003) found that women feared that if the incarceration was disclosed to current employers they would be discriminated against and potentially lose their job. However, keeping this a secret can limit the women's social contact and support networks and cause the family more stress (Huebner, 2005). This feeling of shame can be linked both to the incarceration and the individuals own inability to cope (Codd, 2008). Anderson (1966) found a sense of shame in most families, and wives often reported being preached to about their "no good" husbands. She also found that these women will often withdraw from society in order to avoid discussing their partner's incarceration (Anderson, 1966).

The degree of shame appears to vary historically and socially. For example in a study by Morris in 1965 the absence of a man in the home was a major source of shame. However, because of changed social attitudes, the absence of a man in the house may no longer be a source of stigma. In fact, many homes today are led by a single parent (Codd, 2008). Also, those who had been through the process before were not as ashamed of their partner's incarceration (Codd, 2008).

When the criminal act receives public attention the feeling of embarrassment increases (Fisherman, 1990). In a study by Fisherman (1990), most families felt shame vis-à-vis the outside world, however, they also felt individual shame independent of others' reactions. Wives of sexual assault offenders were especially likely to express feelings of shame. However, the stigmatization was situational with some family and friends reacting with sympathy and emotional support. The type of community the women lived in was directly related to the degree of stigmatization. In crime familiar

communities there was less stigmatization than in communities where arrests were not viewed as an ordinary event (Fisherman, 1990).

Unfortunately, even when a woman has supportive friends and family, officials often stigmatize them. The police may pay close attention to a family that is associated with an incarcerated individual and when visiting the prison the family may feel the stigma (Codd, 2008). Often families are humiliated and disrespected within the prison and are sometimes made to feel like criminals themselves (Chui, 2009; Codd, 2008). Even the clothing that a person is wearing can be restricted and in some states underwire bras are prohibited (Comfort, 2003). Women have to deal with being watched, trapped and even strip-searched.

Difficulties Associated with Role Adjustment

Roles previously assigned to inmates, must be reassigned, usually to the wife. When the father leaves, women must become both mother and father (Anderson, 1966). More than half of the women in Anderson's study mentioned that managing the children was a challenge and that "father" and "breadwinner" were new roles that had to be adopted (1966). The limited amount of research that is available suggests that the incarceration of a parent has many negative effects on a child including instability in the home and school, psychological problems, social inadequacy, attachment issues and a higher risk of delinquency (Breen, 2008; Davies, 1980; Hairston & Addam, 2001). Often these children are already from a disadvantaged family and the incarceration of a parent merely adds to a number of factors that put these children at risk for a number of negative outcomes. The remaining parent is left to cope with the repercussion of a

partner's incarceration on their children, adding to a number of challenges she already is faced with.

Due to these difficulties that families face during the incarceration of a partner they may experience a crisis and go into a downward spiral. This is described in Hill's second phase. However, families generally learn to adapt to the change and thus they will enter what Hill describes as the third phase of crisis model – coping

Coping & Coping Mechanism (Recovery)

After a woman experiences the hardships and difficulties of having a partner incarcerated she must then learn to cope with the change. Major family and life altering decisions must be made in order to restore balance (Lowenstein, 1984). There are a number of factors that may enhance or impair coping among prisoners' families but by far social and economic support seems to be the most important. Other factors which may impact how well a woman is able to cope with the change include religion, availability of support groups, length of sentence, children and communication (Carlson & Cervera, 1991). The success of an inmate's wife's coping mechanisms is important because her adjustment can determine whether or not the marriage or relationship survives the incarceration. Additionally, inmate rehabilitation and success upon release is often dependent on having a family to return to (Carlson & Cervera, 1991).

Unfortunately, little research has been conducted on prisoners' families and an even smaller amount of research has looked specifically at coping mechanisms. Understanding where women seek help and what support systems they require would provide invaluable insight when developing future policies.

Coping, Sentence Length and Experience

Experience and length of sentence has an impact on how well a woman is able to cope. Generally, those who have prior experience with the correctional system and who have had longer experience with corrections cope better (Carlson & Cervera, 1992). Previous experience will eliminate some of the turmoil experienced by first timers as they may be somewhat desensitized and prepared for the process. The experience may provide them with a better understanding of how the system operates and the services available. The length of the sentence allows for more coping time and for the women to adjust and put balance back into her and her family's lives (Lowenstein, 1984; Morris, 1965; Norman & Bar, 1993).

Coping and the Role of Social Support

Seeking social support is one of the ways people cope with stressful situations (Moelker, Andres & Poot, 2006). Sometimes people have extensive social networks such as family, friends and neighbors; therefore professional or organizational support is not needed. Other times families may rely on professional help. Professionals have the advantage of being able to help a large number of clients with similar issues and being able to put clients in contact with each other (Moelker Andres & Poot, 2006).

A number of families are able to rely on parents and other family members for support (Bartone, Adler & Barton, 1994; Chui, 2009; Tang, 2007). Immediate and extended family may be able to meet some of the wife's needs for emotional support and can assume some of the roles of an absent parent. However, the extended family can also have limited resources and often family relationships are strained due to the incarceration

(Carlson & Cervera, 1991). It is possible that the wife's parents encourage her to leave or divorce the inmate and that his parents feel angry and guilty due to his incarceration (Carlson & Cervera, 1991).

In a study conducted by Carlson and Cervera (1992), the most common supports for the wives were family, faith or religion. Carlson and Cervera (1992) found that all wives reported having contact with their extended family and sixty-four percent reported that they provided help through money and babysitting. Seventy-seven percent indicated that their families offered emotional support. However, twenty-four percent said that there were things they wished their families were doing such as being more understanding and listening (Carlson & Cervera, 1992, p. 282). All wives except for one had face-to-face contact with the inmate's family. Forty-one percent received help from their husband's family in the form of financial aid, babysitting and sometimes a place to live. Half of the wives wanted more help from their husband's family in the form of finances, contact with children, and more understanding. More help was received from the wife's family than the husband's family (Carlson & Cervera, 1992).

Many families also received support from neighbours and friends. In Carlson and Cervera's (1992) study more than half reported being close to their neighbors and one third received help from neighbors in the form of loans, babysitting and access to phones (Carlson & Cervera, 1992). However, support from friends and neighbours can also diminish when the incarceration and the woman's situation is seen as partially her fault.

Likewise in a study conducted by Chui (2009) wives of prisoners were able to rely on family members for emotional support. Vranken et al.'s (1984) study confirms that wives most heavily relied on family, friends and neighbours for social support and

coping mechanisms. A number of other studies have found similar results about family, friends and neighbours being a major resource in the ability of families to cope with crisis situations (Bartone, Adler & Barton, 1994).

When family members are unable or unwilling to help the prisoner's wife, often women will turn to formal support in order to help them cope with the loss. Chui (2009) reported that some women turned to formal support but expected the Correctional Services Department to provide prisoners' families with tangible and immediate help. Another area where the Correctional Services Department could have a major influence is communication and visitation.

Coping and Visitation/Communication

Contact can be a valuable coping mechanism for prisoners' families, keeping the members from becoming estranged. This communication can also reduce the strain upon return from incarceration. Keeping in contact will ensure that the two partners are communicating and help the prisoner and his partner to understand what the other is going through (Kaslow, 1978).

Carlson and Cervera (1991) conducted a study looking at the consequences of family reunion programs on inmates and their wives. They found that visiting their husbands, letters and phone calls were used as a coping mechanism and were described as helpful in supporting the relationship between husband and wife**.** Barton, Adler & Barton (1994) found parallel results and communication was seen as a major resource for coping in a crisis situation.

Coping and Demographic Characteristics

Some studies have looked at the demographic characteristics of women who appear to cope better including social status, education level and ethnicity. Lowenstein (1984) found that those with a higher social status and/or higher level of education were able to cope more effectively. This is probably due to several factors including confidence, access to resources and fewer financial struggles. Furthermore, Lowenstein found that personal and family resources played a central role in coping and found that a basic component of the personal resources was a wife's education (1984). The higher the education of the wife, the more she had a realistic perception of her situation and more marketable employment skills. Westhuis, Fafara & Ouellette (2006) found those who had less money and fewer support groups were not coping as well as those who had more money and more support.

In general both white wives and white inmates coped better in a study conducted by Carlson and Cervera (1992). Although the differences were not of great magnitude white women reported having more social support. However, white wives were less likely to rely on spiritual support. Rosenblatt and Wallace (2005) found that African Americans were more likely than Caucasians to suffer traumatic distress in situations of grieving.

Religion can be a source of stability and support for some families and faith in a higher power can provide hope and help to regain some semblance of order. In a study by Farkas and Miller (2007) family members spoke of becoming more religious and viewing their experience as a test of faith. A number of studies show that the African American

culture was an asset for coping and church has been a source of strength (Farkas & Miller, 2007; Westhuis, Fafara & Ouellette, 2006).

Reunion and Inmate Release Barriers (Reorganization)

Reorganization is the final stage of crisis theory and can take place with or without the incarcerated individual. At this stage the woman is creating new patterns and new routines. This final process may involve opening the family ranks to include the partner, realigning power and authority, reworking the division of labour and responsibility, sharing the home and family activities with the partner, renewing the husband-wife intimacies and confidences, assuming father-child ties and bringing a balance between husband-wife, mother-child and father-child relationships (Busuttil & Busuttil, 2001).

The reunion can be very stressful for both partners. Sometimes fantasies of homecoming can be exaggerated and unrealistic. Expectation that her partner will be able to re-insert himself into old routines and roles may be unmet due to change within the family unit or the inmate himself (Busuttil & Busuttil, 2001). The man may find it difficult to find his role within the new structure that was developed in his absence (Farkas & Miller, 2007). Thus new tension may be created. A common request from families is help in preparation for a prisoner's release (Loucks, 2004). Farkas and Miller (2007) found that most families had high hopes for their relationship upon the member's release from prison. However, as the honeymoon period came to an end reality set in and the support and quality of family life declined. Members had to learn about each other all over again outside the prison context and often, when prisoners are released, they suffer

from depression and high stress levels making the transition difficult (Farkas & Miller, 2007).

Incarceration significantly increases the risk of divorce or separation (Chui, 2009). Chui (2009) found that many women worried about their relationship and if they could withstand the long separation. Other women used the imprisonment as an "excuse" to leave an unhappy marriage. Some women may feel empowered by the financial independence during the incarceration. However, the period leading up to the inmates release can hold its own pressure and some women become apprehensive about losing financial control. Others may be concerned that their partner may be upset about how they handled the finances in his absence (Codd, 2008).

It is important to have a stable family to support the incarcerated individual because they are his most significant link to the outside world (Carlson & Cervera, 1991). Instead of being a collaborative process, the returning prisoners can experience loss, psychological change and difficulty adjusting. Simple activities may appear daunting. In addition to the changed environment and sometimes unrealistic expectations, if the inmate was previously addicted to drugs, release can be a stressful and frightening period. Prisoners and family members could fear relapse (Travis & Waul, 2003).

At the same time that an offender is reunited with their families they are also dealing with finding a job, housing, health care, paying off debt etc. Recent changes in the United States welfare system also create barriers to building a relationship. Because offenders often find it difficult to find employment, social assistance should work as a safety net but those who are in violation of their probation or parole and those who are

convicted of drug related crimes can be banned from welfare benefits and food stamps (Travis & Waul, 2003).

For some types of crime, such as sexual crimes, the restrictions to a family can be especially high. There are restrictions on where the family can live and they are subject to harassment from the community. Additionally, in the United States convicted sex offenders with a lifetime registration are ineligible for public housing and other federally funded housing programs (Farkas & Miller, 2007).

In addition to the uphill battle both partners face upon release, incarcerated parents often worry about the future of their family relationships. A number of parents wonder if they will get their children back after they are released from jail or prison. In some states parental rights can be terminated because of criminal activity and incarceration (Hairston, 2002). Furthermore, failure to keep in contact with their children or not adhering to treatment programs can also result in termination (Hairston, 2002).

Some theorists argue that the loss of a loved one due to incarceration can be even more traumatizing than losing a loved one to death (Carlson & Cervera, 1991). The dual aspect of dismemberment and demoralization make imprisonment one of the most severe family crises (Carlson & Cervera, 1991).

This literature review has attempted to demonstrate the various stresses and the possible accompanying crisis experienced by families with incarcerated spouses. The difficulties women faced during the incarceration were discussed along with the coping mechanisms that are often utilized. Additionally, the worries or fears that the women often experience concerning their partner's return were also reviewed.

The literature on crisis and families who experience a crisis suggests that a four phase process is involved. Phase one is the initial stressor or incarceration, of a partner, phase two is the disorganizational stage in which women experience many hardships such as financial difficulties, stigmatization, visitation difficulties and emotional issues. In the third phase women learn to cope with the changed situation using a variety of means including friends, family and neighbours. Finally, women learn to adjust to the crisis and their changed situation either with or without their partner.

This thesis is an attempt to explore experiences of women with a partner who is incarcerated and how their experiences relate to crisis theory and if they do, in fact, meet the criteria for crisis as defined by Hill (1949). A very small portion of research in Canada has been dedicated to women with a partner in prison and there has been no research in Canada on this topic and how it relates to crisis theory. Due to the lack of research it is clear that this is a marginalized group in society and in need of investigation. The literature above is mostly conducted in the United States and United Kingdom and although there will most likely be some similarities, the uniqueness of the Canadian Correctional System may uncover differences in women's experiences between the nations.

This thesis will explore three main questions; first, what are the difficulties that women face during their male partners incarceration? Second, what coping mechanisms were helpful in adjusting to the change during the incarceration and what coping mechanisms would have been helpful had they been available during their partner's incarceration? Third, did the women involved in the study have any worries regarding

their partner's return? This next section outlines the data analysis, sample procedures and interview construction associated with this thesis.

Methodology

Procedure

The data was collected using ten semi structured interviews between August 2010 and October 2010 at Rittenhouse and John Howard Society in Toronto, Ontario. Both Rittenhouse and John Howard Society agreed to allow access to their clients in order to facilitate this research project. The principle investigator conducted all interviews and personally transcribed all of the recordings. The interviews, ranging in length from twenty-five minutes to one and a half hours, were conducted in private offices at both Rittenhouse and John Howard Society Toronto to ensure comfort and confidentiality. This thesis uses a qualitative method to answer the question - Can women with male partners who are incarcerated be described as going through a crisis based on Hill's Crisis Theory model?

Measures

Hill's crisis theory was used to construct the questionnaire. His theory has previously been used to study women with male partners who were incarcerated (Anderson, 1966; Carlson & Cervera, 1992). Hill's theory is divided into four phases. These four phases were used to construct the questionnaire for this research. The protocol contains twenty-three open ended questions.

The first part of the questionnaire asked demographic questions such as age (" How old are you?"), race ("How would you describe your racial background"?), education ("How far have you gone in school?"), employment ("Do you have a job?"), household (" Who do you live with right now?"), partner education ("How far did your

partner go in school?"), partner employment ("Did he have a job?"), partner's household ("Where you living with your partner prior to incarceration?"), relationship with partner ("What is your relationship with your partner?"), children ("Do you have any children and how old are they?").

The rest of the questionnaire was broken down into the four phases of Hill's theory. The first series of questions focused on the stressor event – the incarceration. For this phase, questions were asked about the incarceration length ("How long has your partner been in prison?"), nature of the incarceration ("Why is he there?"), and expected release ("When do you think he will get out?").

The second group of questions focused on Hill's disorganization phase. These questions were based on hardships experienced by the women. In this section questions were asked about financial hardships ("How has your life changed since your partner has gone to prison?"), visitation ("Has getting to see/talk to your partner been an issue?"), stigmatization ("What has the reaction to the incarceration been?"), and child difficulties ("How do you think your partners' incarceration has impacted your kids?").

The third set of questions were based on coping mechanisms and questions were asked about whether or not the situation was stressful ("Do you find the incarceration stressful?"), where the women turned for help ("Is there anywhere you could/did go for help?"), and where they could use the most help ("Where do you think you could use the biggest help?").

The final phase of questions was based on adjustment. The women were asked what the most successful way of coping was ("What has been the most successful way of coping?"), if they had any concerns about their partners return ("Are there any worries

regarding your partners return?"), and what advice they would give other women in their situation ("Do you have any advice you would give another woman in a similar situation?").

Data Collection

The researcher first spoke to Rittenhouse regarding this thesis in January 2010. Rittenhouse provides support and advocacy to prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families. They agreed to recruit participants through their online blog, email and word of mouth. Their online blog, used for general discussions as well as promoting justice issues, featured a recruitment poster as well as a recruitment letter provided by the principle investigator. Unfortunately, the blog was unsuccessful and finding participants was done primarily through word of mouth.

Rittenhouse then put the researcher directly in contact with John Howard Society who agreed to help facilitate this thesis. John Howard Society is an organization that provides help to offenders reintegrating into society. Their staff handed out flyers with the study details and contact information to women that take a bus to and from Toronto to various institutions. The study was also briefly presented by myself to a few staff members at John Howard Society and to some of their clients during a short meeting at John Howard Society in Toronto. This sampling strategy turned out to be much more successful.

Once the women expressed interest they were given a brief description of the study which included an email address and telephone number dedicated to this study. Anyone who was interested then contacted the researcher by email or telephone to set up an interview time that best suited the participant. Participants did receive compensation

of $20 for the interview. The compensation was used both as an incentive and to re-numerate the women for their time. It was stressed to all participants that they would still receive compensation whether they completed the interview or not.

The purpose of the study was outlined to each participant as well as any risks and benefits. Each participant was told that there was no requirement to answer any of the questions and that all answers and communication would be kept confidential. A formal consent form was administered verbally to avoid difficulty with literacy and to ensure understanding of the proposed project and questions.

The proposed thesis was submitted to the research ethics board at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology on May 25, 2010 and ethical approval for the research was granted on July 5, 2010.

Analytic Strategy

After transcribing each interview, the interviews were reviewed and key themes were identified. As the themes emerged a coding frame was developed. Themes were then compared to this frame and reorganized into larger thematic categories. The results reflect these larger themes that emerged within the data.

Subsequently, grounded theory was used to analyze the data. Grounded theory is used to explore qualitative data and generates theory through data based on observations of a particular phenomenon. Thus the theory develops after the data has been analyzed and is grounded in derived from the collected data. Consequently, the collection of data was not devoted to isolated cases and fragmented data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Grounded theory allows for the original theoretical framework to be flexible and allows the data that has been collected to either confirm or challenge the original theory.

Results

The following results are based on ten interviews conducted with women who either previously or at the time had an incarcerated male partner in either the federal or provincial system. Although the questions were prepared using the four phases of Hill's Crisis Theory model, the answers and interviews were ultimately guided by the participants.

Sample

The research population is limited to female partners of an incarcerated male population because the prison population is primarily male and, therefore, women are more often those who must cope with an incarcerated partner. The population is drawn from women who have partners in the provincial and federal system. Partners were described as those who are married, common law or dating. Most of the women who described themselves as dating had been with their partner for an extended period of time. Also, putting further restrictions on the sample would prove problematic in finding women to participate in the study, which turned out to be a difficult task even with a more inclusive sampling strategy. One of the drawbacks of this study is that all participants will have come into contact with community help. Therefore, the study is missing data from those who have not sought help or have yet to find an organization that can help.

Of the participants interviewed the ages ranged from 23 to 60 with an average age of 36. The vast majority of women in this study described themselves as White, two as Black, one as Native, one as Spanish and one as Pilipino. Two of the women had not completed high school, three had a high school diploma or an equivalent, one had some

college, two completed college and two completed a university degree. Seven women described themselves as working, one was volunteering and two were unemployed at the time of the interview. Four of the women lived alone, three lived with their children, two lived with their parent(s) and one lived with a roommate.

Three of the participants described their partner as not having a high school education, six described their partner as having completed high school or a high school equivalent and one had a university degree. Of the incarcerated partners seven were not employed prior to the incarceration and three were employed. Six of the women were living with their partners prior to the incarceration and four were not living with their partner prior to the incarceration. Five women described their relationship as common law, three as married and two as dating. Six of the women did not have children and four women did have children.

The incarceration length of the women's partners ranged from four months to eleven years with an average of three years. Three of the partners were incarcerated for drug related crimes, one for child support neglect, one for attempted murder, one for fraud, one for sexual assault, one for possession of child pornography, one for assault and one for murder. Of the ten women who were interviewed, two partners were already released and other release dates ranged from November 2010 (a month after the interviews were completed) to three years. Six of the women were only able to guess the release date because it depended on the parole board, appeals and good behavior.

The women in this study described financial burdens (n=10), communication and visitation barriers (n=10), stigmatization (n=10), emotional stress (n=10). They described

coping by means of professional and organizational help (n=5), support from friends and family (n=5) and talking/writing to the offender (n=4). They felt that they could have benefitted from having financial help (n=4), someone to talk to who understood their experiences (n=7), more information about the system (n=4) and help for their partner (n=2). In this study two of the eight women had their partner recently released from prison. These women experienced a decrease in privacy (n=1) and a change in their partner's attitude upon release (n=1). The women whose partners were still incarcerated worried about their partner returning to crime and not finding a job (n=7), that their relationship could dissolve (n=4), that their partner may become institutionalized (n=5) and restrictions due to parole and/or probation (n=1).

Table 1: Women's Responses Based on Hill's Crisis Theory Model

Disorganization:	Financial barriers	N=10
	Communication and visitations barriers	N=10
	Stigmatization	N=10
	Emotional stress	N=10
Coping Mechanisms:	Professional and organizational help	N=5
	Support from friends and family	N=5
	Talking/writing to the offender	N=4
Areas of Need:	Social support	N=7
	Financial	N=4
	Information	N=4
	Help for offender	N=2
Reorganization:	Returning to crime and lack of employment	N=7
	Institutionalization	N=5
	Relationship strain	N=4
	Restrictions due to parole/probation	N=1

The women identified five hardships (n=10) that caused disorganization, three recovery or coping mechanisms (n=10) and four adjustment worries (n=10) that often follow the incarceration of their partners. The women in this study appear to follow a similar pattern to what Hill described and all the women described the situation as stressful. The hardships experienced by these women and the coping mechanisms used appear to follow the crisis process described in the previous literature review. However, there are some major distinctions which will subsequently be detailed. One of the most significant findings from this study is that most of the participants in this study did not appear to return to a pre incarceration state with the return of their partner. In essence, it would appear that the last part of Hill's crisis process is missing.

Difficulties Experienced by Prisoners and their Families (Disorganization)

The balance of the following sections present detailed results based on the women's responses.

Financial Difficulties

All the women in this study mentioned some form of financial strain. Financial difficulties arose from the cost of visitation and collect calls, extra spending on legal fees and the offender's needs and household cut backs due to the loss of their partner's income. The most common themes were extra spending and collect calls. This differs from the previous research in the United States that suggests the main source of financial difficulties is generally due to loss of family income. In this study the cut backs were not primarily due to the loss of income but to the extra costs associated with having an incarcerated partner.

Most of the women in this study continued to offer financial support throughout the incarceration. Money was often spent on a partner's canteen, clothes, televisions, flip flops, lawyers and getting the offender out of trouble with another inmate once they had incurred debt. Some women sent money monthly to their partner for phone cards, canteen etc. Some of the inmates had jobs; however, items in the canteen were not priced in relation to the extremely small salary provided in prison. One woman expressed the pressure she faces to get name brand clothing because if she were to buy no-name clothing her partner's status within prison would be affected and, in turn, this would affect his "stay".

Women were also left with the burden of lawyers and legal fees. Legal fees and lengthy appeals can be very costly for families (Hannem, 2003; King, 2005). Some families are forced to use their life savings and endure large amounts of debt (King, 2005). Even when successful the burden of legal fees can leave the family full of debt adding strain to a relationship (King, 2005). One woman spoke of making a "deal" with the crown because they could no longer afford the legal expenses and were forced to negotiate a plea.

> *Half of the stuff that was said and read that day they can't prove but we couldn't go to court [because] they lengthen it until we ran out of money. If we would have had the money, we would have went to court because there was some stuff they couldn't prove. That's how the system works. Justice is only for the rich, not for the poor (Participant 8, October 20, 2010).*

The federal and the provincial calling systems are set up differently. In the provincial system the calls must be collect and can be very expensive. This is a major

financial concern for a lot of women. Because a collect call cannot be placed to a cell phone directly, if the women do not have a home phone they have two options; they either do not talk to the offender on the phone or the offender can call a land line and that person can three-way the cell phone. Usually it falls on the shoulders of the offender's loved one to pick up the tab. Several women struggled to pay phone bills and in one case, when the woman could not pay the bill it ended up in collections.

> *Well when he was in _____ it was crazy. Like, my mom's phone bill is over $2,000. So we are still paying that off. In provincial there are no phone cards, you have to call collect... Every month I have my two bills…and he's like another bill and that's something that is like a fixed expense because I gotta make sure that the moneys on the phone, I gotta make sure he's okay (Participant 4, October 15, 2010).*

In the federal system there seems to be more options for keeping the price of phone bills down although, the women must complete a form with her number and hope that it will be approved so that her partner will be able to call her. The phone cards are less expensive than collect calling and some women get a local number so they do not get long distance charges. The women pay for a local phone line and have that number approved.

Every month someone must make sure that there is enough money on the offender's phone card. If the money does not get to the offender by the due date they may have to wait until the following month until they have the option to deposit money again. Subsequently, the woman will not be able to talk to her partner on the phone until the following month at the earliest.

In addition to speaking with the offender, visiting the offender also came at a financial cost. The John Howard Society provides a bus to the institutions for a much lower cost than any other means of travel but, even with the discounted rate, travelling expenses were still identified as a financial burden for four women. One participant spoke of the money she is saving on the bus compared to public transportation. Without the service offered by John Howard Society (JHS) she would be forced to travel via Greyhound costing her $200 plus cab fare to the institution.

Extra travel expenses were added for women who were not from the Toronto area. These women were forced to pay travel to Toronto in order to catch the JHS bus. One woman paid approximately $110 for travel expenses for an eighty minute visit.

Due to these extra expenses some of the household's income is reduced. The combination of less income and additional financial burdens forced some women to reorganize their own finances. Even if the income provided by their partner was illegal, it was a financial strain when it was removed. Women were forced to cut back on bills such as cable, phone, groceries and personal spending in order to support their loved ones. Two women were forced to take on a second job in order to keep up with the extra demands.

> *Uummm…[I cut back on] my groceries. I have lost 20 pounds since he's been in; I guess that's a good thing...hahah - not really. I don't eat healthy at all because I don't have the extra money to be able to go get like a full load of groceries. I am just picking up my second job now so I can make ends meet and be able to get groceries. So, that's been a big cut for me (Participant 9, October 21, 2010).*

Four women struggled to make household payments. One had to move out of her apartment because her partner had been paying the bills and another had collection agencies hounding her and was borrowing just to get by.

> *I lost a lot of things…the car was one of them because I couldn't make payments. Financially it's been a big strain...I find myself borrowing from my mother but she never asks for it back - its hard - financially its hard that he was taking care of all the bills and once he got arrested my bread and butter was gone, meaning my provider was gone…You go without to pay other things…You need to sacrifice to get certain things paid. So I am trying to work out everything (Participant 2, October 5, 2010).*

Although the issue of incurred debt while in prison was only mentioned by one woman, it is worth noting. Debt can occur through drugs, gambling etc. Since prison wages are low and the price of drugs and other contraband is high, prisoners often have to steal or borrow money. When debt cannot be paid, for safety reasons, they are forced to "rat" and violate the inmate code (Crewe, 2005). This in turn could create violence within the prison.

Financial difficulties were mentioned to some degree by all the women in this study. The most common financial barriers were collect calls and phone cards, extra spending due to legal fees, supporting offender's institutional needs and additional spending due to travel. Some women were forced to cut back on luxuries such as cable, spending time with friends and necessities such as food. Without a doubt, consistent with the literature, financial difficulties are a major hardship for women who have an incarcerated partner. As noted previously however, for the women in this study, it was the increased cost associated with supporting an incarcerated partner rather than a loss of income that proved most difficult.

Difficulties in Maintaining Contact

Offenders and family members have three ways of communicating - visitation, phone calls or letters. Unfortunately, even though family members have proven to be a great asset in the rehabilitation process, the deterrents to maintaining communication can prove to be insurmountable. Families are able to offer moral support, financial help and hope during incarceration and shelter, food, financial aid, jobs and encouragement upon release (Shollenberger, 2009). Given the benefits of maintaining contact it would seem important to attempt to remove barriers to visitation.

However, the women in this study identified many barriers that they faced during visitation including feeling degraded and uncomfortable, denial of physical contact, their loved one being moved without knowledge of their whereabouts and being refused a visit or having their visits cut short.

Six women mentioned feeling uncomfortable or degraded while visiting an offender for various reasons. They felt they were being criminalized themselves, being treated as part of the system, having someone watching and listening to what they do and say or being sniffed by dogs and having to go through ion scanners.

> *We are not in the system and I think that we [women] get penalized and they [the guards] make the experience unfavourable to get you not to come. They wand you, you go through metal detectors, they go through your personal belongings and it makes you feel uncomfortable and it makes you feel like you are part of the system and not [just] visiting someone in the system. I think that they should give credit to those who come (Participant 2, October 5, 2010).*

Two women mentioned being denied entry to the prison or being placed on closed visits for having tested positive for drugs on the ion scanner. The

women mentioned the sensitivity of the scanner and being centered out. The women made many efforts to successfully get through the scanner without setting it off. As a plea for their visits, the two women asked the guards to search them for any drugs but the guards refused.

Not mentioned in previous literature, was the lack of physical contact allowed. Seven women mentioned this as being a problem. Often they wanted to hug, kiss or touch their loved one but the rules within the prison prohibited them from doing so. Some women could not touch because they were separated by glass; others were under the watchful eye of guards who would let them know if there was too much physical contact. Some women mentioned the lack of consistency in enforcing these rules. With the consequences of breaching a rule being so high (the potential to loss visitation privileges) the lack of rule consistency made the visit much more difficult. Some officials allowed some contact while others would not allow any. The lack of physical contact weighed heavily on the women.

> *No hugs, no touching. The closest I get is rubbing the glass and in my mind I am touching him. I think that someone on a less serious charge should be allowed "touch" visits under supervision at a desk but they don't care about the charges (Participant 2, October 5, 2010).*

There are pitfalls upon arrival at the prison that may render the travel a waste of time. Institutions may be on lock-down or refusing visitors for other reasons with no notice given to family members who travel in order to see their loved ones. Four of the women in this study were either refused a visit or had their visits cut short. Some of the women had their visits cut short because the officials in the prison started the visitation time before the women had entered the room or as punishment for offenders. In one case,

during a prison lockdown, the women were forced to wait in a small shack for four hours given only water and one washroom break while also being ridiculed by authority. Another woman was refused any visits from January until August because the paperwork was slow.

> *He was in there in January and I just started getting to see him in August. I sent my paper work in as soon as I could and then the paper work somehow got lost and then it got found and it's like all this nonsense. So finally when I was about to complain I got approved (Participant 6, October 18, 2010).*

Four women mentioned that their loved ones were moved either to places that were too far to travel or even to undisclosed facilities. One participant mentioned that her partner was transferred out west and then down east because they were told he would have a better chance of being paroled. She was unable to visit for two years.

Three partners were transferred and the women struggled to find out where they were being held. Two of the women had to find out from other inmates on the inside who called them with information of their partner's whereabouts. In two cases, when the prison officials were contacted the women were told that they could not give out the information because it was confidential. Furthermore, if their partner's were in the federal system they cannot call until the number is approved and the women cannot get the proper form if she does not know which institution her partner is at.

> *When he was transferred he left a message saying – honey I think tomorrow they are going to transfer me and I am not sure if it's ____ or _____, that's all I heard…So every night I came home from work and I waited and I waited and I waited for that phone call. I kept saying – "no I can't go out tonight I haven't got that phone call." Then I am sitting there Christmas eve, or the day before, and the phone rang…and she said my dad is in with your husband and he's safe and he says he loves you very much and he's okay. You have no idea the weight off my*

> *shoulders. In the mean time, I go on the internet and I am searching because I know where he is now. So I went and got the form that you fill out for visitation and phone calls. I filled it out and I mailed it out to the prison. Then he is able to phone me, it was probably six-eight weeks into being in there and I got the first phone call from him (Participant 8, October 20, 2010).*

It is time consuming to visit a loved one in prison. Nine of the ten women in this study did not live in the same city where their partner was incarcerated. The travel time ranged from two to six hours one-way and visit length ranged from forty minutes in the provincial system to half a day in the federal system. Even when the visits were short, the women had to book full days off work due to the travel time.

> *And that's a full day. Like I leave here at 3:20am and I get back home if I am lucky, at 5pm. (Participant 9, October 21, 2010).*

Private Family Visits (PFV) are another visiting option. They are held in a trailer located on the prison grounds where family members can go and visit for a day or two. Three of the ten women who were interviewed were allowed PFV's. The others were refused either because the particular prison that their loved one was held did not offer PFV's or they did not qualify. Women could be refused family visits because they did not live with their partner prior to incarceration, were not married or considered common law, they did not visit the offender frequently enough or they were deemed not a "good influence".

Those who qualify for family visiting explained that they can be very expensive, intrusive, and uncomfortable and that often the food that you have paid for and do not eat is thrown in the garbage. The families are forced to provide all necessities for the weekend from an approved grocery store. Nothing can be brought from the family home and leftovers are not to be taken out of the prison or back to the inmate's cell. This can be

expensive as all condiments such as sugar, salt, etc must be purchased and then thrown out after the visit. The women described the visit as feeling "locked in a cage" with an extreme power imbalance was described. But most women looked forward to PFV's so that they could have private conversations.

Although all women in this study were able to visit the offender for some period of time, not all were able to communicate via telephone. However, those that were able to communicate via telephone described barriers. Many felt that they did not have the privacy they needed because the phone calls are all monitored and often they were unwilling to talk about any personal issues on the phone because they did not want other people hearing them.

Two women did not have the opportunity to speak to their loved one on the phone because they did not have a land line and, therefore, were unable to receive any collect calls. One woman was forced to choose between phone calls or visits because she was unable to afford both.

Although all the women in this study were able to communicate with their partner to some degree via visitation, phone calls and/or letters; there were barriers to all types of communication. Given the evidence that families help with reintegration it seems logical to revisit what can be done to eliminate some of the communication barriers between family members and facilitate a positive line of communication.

Information Barriers

Three women mentioned that finding information was very difficult. They experienced confusion when their partner was arrested and were not informed on where

to turn for assistance. One woman mentioned the pressure to find the information needed for herself as well as being the outside link on which her partner depended. They faced pressure to understand the system, the court process, appeals process, etc.

> *He can only call me certain times because not everybody is going to pick up a collect call. So there is pressure [on] me to constantly stay in contact with the court and there is pressure [on] me to get papers and bring them in. Sure it's in his hands, but it's in mine too….. Even when they go on parole to call different houses. So there is a lot of pressure when the guys call you to do certain stuff because only you can do it. They can't call all the time. So there is that on top of emotional, on top of financial and everything else you have to do (Participant 4, October 15, 2010).*

Two women mentioned feeling pressure to stay in the relationship to support their partner. They felt that if they left their partner it would be devastating for him since he had no one else to turn to.

> *I don't wanna say I feel pressure to stay but…I kinda do in some ways. I guess part of me wants to stay because I have been with him for a while and the other part is because he doesn't have anyone else…And I am not gonna lie and say I haven't thought about leaving but I haven't done it and I don't think I will (Participant 4, October 15, 2010).*

Difficulties Associated with Stress and Stigmatization

Predictably, the incarceration was described as very emotional. Without exception the women mentioned feeling emotionally stressed. Some withdrew from friends and family, one woman was arguing more with her partner due to the stress they were both under and two women mentioned not being able to talk to their partners on the phone as emotionally draining.

Three women tried to keep their emotions hidden when visiting their partner because they did not want to put any extra stress on him or get him upset.

> *There has been times when I have been upset about something on the outside and I have gone in there and tried not to take it in because I know that upsets him more. When I get upset it's hard on him because he can't just hug me and tell me that it's going to be okay. So, that's difficult, that's hard. You take the simple things for granted that you get every day until you don't get them, like I will have a really good day and I just want to pick up the phone and say, this happened but I can't do that (Participant 9, October 21, 2010).*

The previous literature does not discuss how women may worry about their partner's well being. However, this was the most common form of emotional stress mentioned in this study. Five of the women mentioned that worry over their partners' physical wellbeing is a major stress. Three women mentioned altercations that their partners had while incarcerated and two women mentioned a death threat on their partner. The following is a description of this partner's first night in jail.

> *They beat him up that night because when they put him in the detention center the guard that brought him in told everybody what he was in for and there was one of the prisoners there that beat him up. The guys on that ward threatened him, they said – if you are here tomorrow morning you are dead, you are dead. So, he had to call the guard and said I need to go in the hole because if he was there in the morning they said they were going to beat the shit out of him, they were going to kill him (Participant 8, October 20, 2010).*

Three of the women did not worry about their partner being a target but worried about him initiating a physical altercation with another inmate. The women mentioned a tough status that the men have to maintain and that the prisoner will look wimpy if they do not fight. They mentioned an inmate code in which you must defend your friends and appear tough.

> *Oh, of course I worry, ya but it's because he has such a tough guy attitude that he will stand up no matter what and that's what worries me because he won't back down and I understand that because he's there and he doesn't want to back down because he doesn't want to be someone's*

> *_____hahaha. So he doesn't back down but I am afraid that one time when he doesn't [back down] something bad will happen. He is a big guy and he can handle his own but that doesn't mean that someone else doesn't come better prepared (Participant 9, October 21, 2010).*

On top of dealing with the stress of having a partner in prison, women were forced to endure stigma on the outside. The most difficult burden was the stigmatization of having an incarcerated partner and often having to bear the ridicule by others or trying to hide the incarceration altogether. All of the women in this study experienced some degree of stigmatization from guards, family, friends, the public or a combination. Stigma is often transferred to the family and family members can feel a sense of shame from friends and other relatives (Carlson & Cervera, 1991).

Four of the women said that they felt the guards were criminalizing them and degrading them for being the partner of a prisoner - guilty by association.

> *Because I am out here and he [partner] is in there, [the guards] can treat you the way [they] want. They criminalize me for being in a relationship. They degrade you and it's like because they had a higher authority they can sit there and degrade you (Participant 5, October 15, 2010).*

Three of the women experienced derogatory remarks from the guards about their partner being incarcerated.

> *Sometimes they [the guards] joke like – I don't even know why you girls do this? It's a waste of time…..whatever (Participant 4, October 15, 2010).*

Two women mentioned that the treatment by the guards depends largely on how they felt about their partner and what crime their partner has committed. If a guard does not like the inmate, they will treat the female partner more harshly than if they are with an "ideal" inmate.

Friends and family also contributed to the women's feelings of stigmatization. Although some women received support from friends and family, most experienced some form of stigmatization. Eight of ten women mentioned that they were told their partner was "no good" and they should leave him. One woman was even cut off from visiting her brother's kids because she refused to leave her partner.

> *You can do better…the famous line…you can do better, he's not going to change, why would you want that for yourself. Your family is always wanting the best for you naturally...so I hear things like – would he ever wait for you? Why don't you find someone you go to school with? It's a lot of badgering (Participant 2, October 5, 2010).*

When family and friends were not supportive the women were forced to suppress emotions and often avoided the topic. Four of the women kept the truth about the incarceration hidden from family and/or friends and others told only part of the truth.

> *My father, I am very close with and he doesn't [know]. He knows about him but since I live on my own I just say you know he's at work and that he works a lot. At family functions I always say, you know, he's somewhere else. So I haven't had that conversation and I am hoping not to (Participant 9, October 21, 2010).*

The final form of stigmatization came from the community. Of the three women who felt stigmatized by the community, one experienced stigmatization from those who were involved in illegal activity but not from those not involved in illegal activities. She would have "customers" ask if she had any drugs.

The other two women were subject to stigmatization from the public as a whole because their crimes were in the media. It seems that when the crime was a higher profile crime the women are more likely to experience stigmatization from the community and the media.

> *My name did come up and news reporters would say – ya this girl is sticking with someone like that. Ya, it was really bad. When I would leave the court with his mom the media people would be like – how does it feel to be with a guy who took a woman's life away? So heartless. It was like a horror movie (Participant 10, October 22, 2010).*

All the women experienced some degree of disorganization because of financial hardship, communication barriers, stigmatization, emotional stress or a combination. No woman, in this study, was able to escape the hardships that follow the incarceration of a partner. Thus the women were forced to deal with their reality and learn how to cope with their changed situation.

Coping and Coping Mechanisms (Recovery)

Not surprisingly, all of the women in this study described the situation as stressful but were able to find some means of coping including professional help, support from family and friends or communication with the offender. However, all of the women stated that they could have used more help had it been available. The coping methods used were fairly consistent with previous data.

Most (seventy percent) did not seek professional help other than lawyers and the John Howard Society bus. Professional counseling and support workers seemed to be utilized more by higher educated women. Although this method of coping was described as being very helpful, the women had to actively seek out help as it was not automatically offered to them. One woman described the professional help as a necessity because she and her children were traumatized by the event. Another woman found a doctor who specifically helped women deal with partners who are incarcerated and found the experience very useful.

The experience of both isolation and supporting an inmate can have a detrimental effect on self-image and coping levels (Hannem, 2003). Two women relied on family to help cope with the incarceration. One of the two women found support in her partner's family; the other in her own family. More common was the use of friends for support, five women were able to find a friend they could talk to about the incarceration and who they could count on for some support. However, some women were reluctant to tell their friends about the incarceration at first because of embarrassment. It is worth noting that, although friends were relied on as a major source of support, they were also described as a major source of stigma.

> *I have one friend and I called him and he spent four hours with me and we walked up and down, up and down and he was amazing. I work with him and he was a true trooper because when I called him he was at a restaurant with his other friend and I said – "my husband has just been arrested" – and he said "I am on my way". I don't know what I would have done (Participant 8, October 20, 2010).*

Communication with the offender was also a coping mechanism for five women. This communication was in the form of visitation, phone calls and writing letters. It seemed that without contact with the offender the women became more stressed. Although contact was described as a financial burden, it also helped women deal emotionally and to cope with the realities of incarceration and in some instances to put their mind at ease by ensuring their partner was okay. Two women described writing letters as similar to writing in their diary.

> *Some days I send him three letters, he probably has a letter every day of the week. So that's my way of coping and talking with him and making sure he knows what's going on with me. It's like writing in your diary. I feel connected if I am writing or sometimes I will listen to the phone*

> *messages he left me on the phone over and over again just to hear his voice (Participant 6, October 18, 2010).*

Areas of Need

Although all the women in this study mentioned some form of coping, they were still in need of further assistance and mentioned areas where they could have used further help. These responses are very important for policy implications – who better to ask what assistance is needed than the women themselves? When asked where they could have used the most assistance had it been available, the women mentioned financial help, information and help for their partner but, by far, the most common response was more programs and someone to talk to. Seven women indicated that the lack of organization and support made coping more difficult. They needed someone who understood their feelings and difficulties that they could connect with and who could help in a nonjudgmental way. Women wanted to talk to people in a professional setting as well as those with a shared common experience. Unfortunately, the recent cut backs only exacerbate the problem. Even once the need has been identified, lack of funding makes a solution unlikely.

> *So just having like those resources available [would be helpful] even counseling. It's just really hard and there is not really any programs and you can understand to a certain extent that the government is going to put in more programs for other things [rather] than this because at the end of the day [the government] look[s] at them as criminals. But I feel like I really need that, like sometimes I feel like I am going crazy (Participant 4, October 15, 2010).*

This woman has summarized a common feeling of worthlessness and frustration that a lot of women experienced. Two women mentioned that talking amongst those in similar situations happens informally in the visiting room but that an organization would facilitate the connection. One woman mentioned that having a professional organization

to coordinate help for families on the outside to connect with their partners on the inside would also be helpful.

> *I think an important thing would be to even have counseling with your partner and some kind of connection between the community and the jail would be good…We are still so far apart because he has missed so much of my life. I have grown so much and I think if you don't have that [interaction] a lot of relationships don't last (Participant 4, October 15, 2010).*

Half of the women in this study felt blindsided and did not know what to do or where to turn. They needed information on what to expect and how the system works. They felt lost, having no formal way of gathering such information. For those with literacy problems or those unable to use a computer the issue was amplified. One woman learned how to use the computer after her partner was incarcerated.

> *They need people who are willing to help these women understand the process. The information, it's not available. If you don't have an internet god for sake. I learned the computer after this all happened. I had a woman help me and I would kiss her feet today because she opened the world for me (Participant 8, October 20, 2010).*

Four women acknowledged financial burdens as a major issue when asked where they could use help. Two women mentioned finances generally and one woman mentioned a need specifically for communication assistance and discounted phone cards. The fourth woman, although she did not think she herself "deserved" financial help, thought that anyone with children should receive financial assistance.

> *I think that financial help should be available but not for me because I was living a lifestyle that consisted of "dirty" money. I think single women with children should get help, especially those who are not getting child support (Participant 2, October 5, 2010).*

Lastly, two women wanted resources to help their partner either to be treated with dignity and to receive basic rights or to help them reintegrate back into society upon release. These women mentioned the fear that their partner will have emotional difficulties once released and wanted help reducing barriers to reintegration.

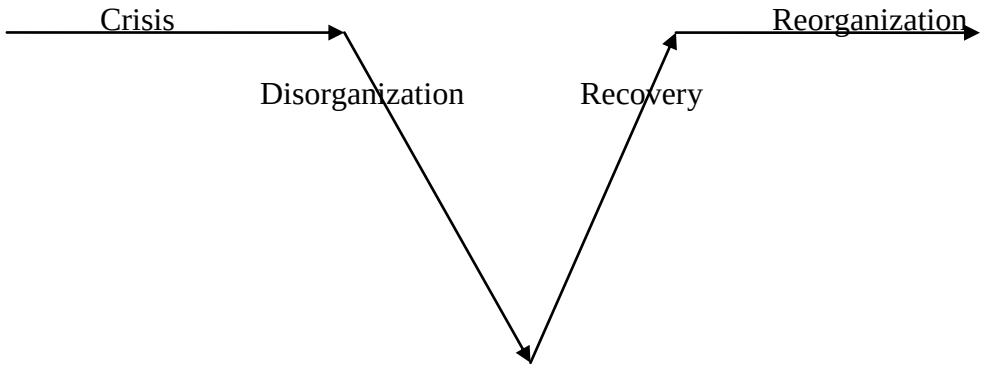
> *If you look up institutions it says they are here to rehabilitate. [But] it's not. You're making them worse [and] that's why half of the guys come out and then they go right back in because they are so used to being treated like animals and they start to think it's the same way out here. It's not right (Participant 9, October 21, 2010).*

According to Crisis Theory, during the coping stage the women are beginning to climb the ladder back to "normalcy" or a state close to or parallel to that of pre incarceration. Thus, although the reunion and inmate release stage should without a doubt have some ups and downs, the crisis should be nearing an end. However, according to this study the crisis is far from over when the inmate is released.

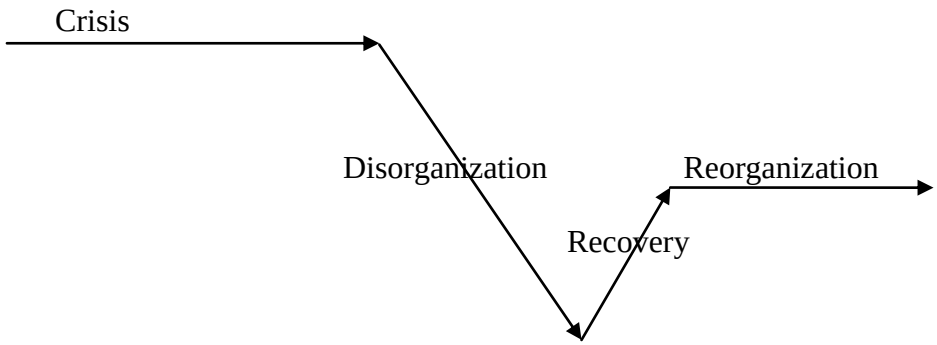
Reunion and Inmate Release Barriers (Reorganization)

In this research the readjustment phase varied greatly from Hill's original theory. The women in this study did not adjust to a state parallel to that of pre incarceration. Although there were some coping mechanisms in place and many found some stable routine, the disorganization and hardships were very much still a reality. Below are some of the patterns found:

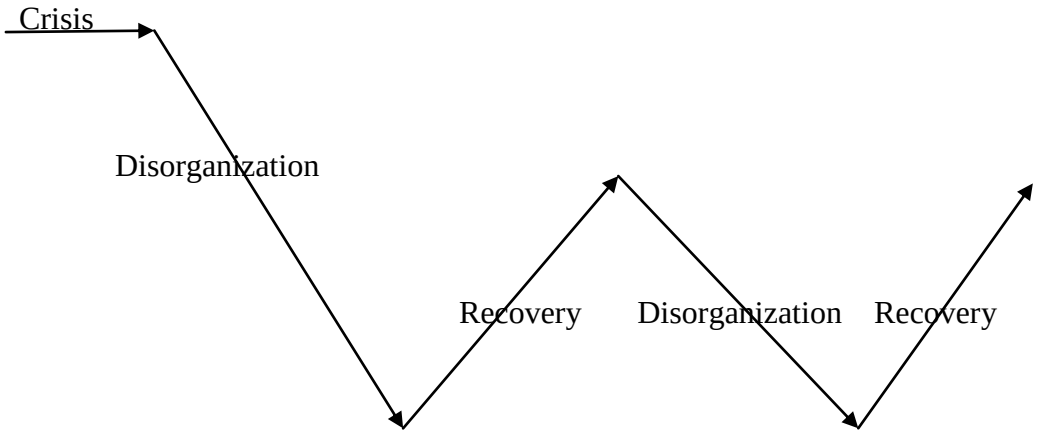
Hill's original model:

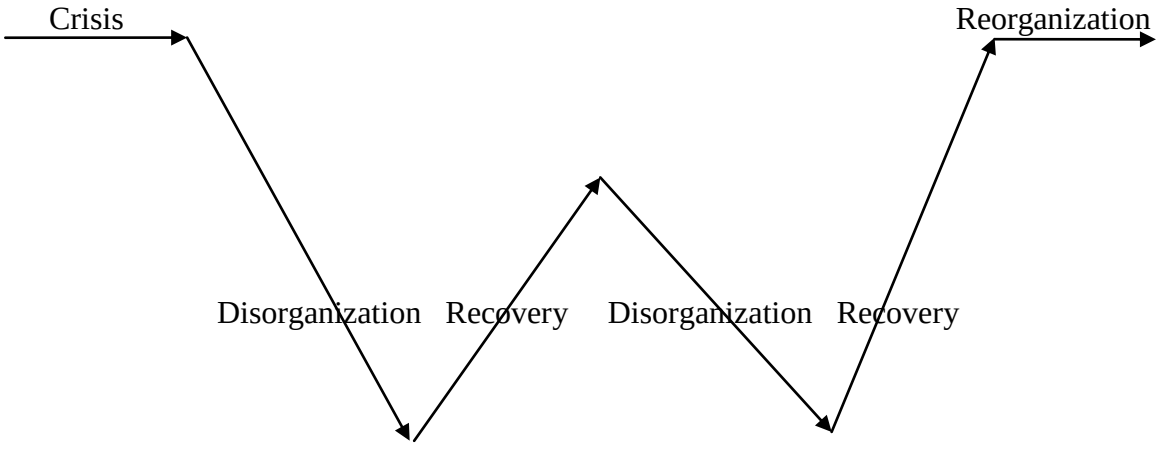


Partner's still incarcerated:



Partner's released from incarceration:





Although the women's stages of coping varied, only one woman's life appeared to return to a pre incarceration state at the time of the interview. This particular woman's partner has been released from prison and they have since separated. However, immediately after his release signs of a new stressor and potentially a new crisis surfaced due to the changes in her partner and the separation.

Of the two women whose partners were out of prison, there were two main issues following release. First, one woman felt that she was constantly under the watchful eye of social workers, probation officers and other professionals. The second woman's partner was withdrawn and depressed which ultimately played a part in their separation.

> *He was a lot more timid, he sort of came back to himself after maybe a few months but physically his voice was different, he talked a lot softer and it sounded like he needed to clear his throat a lot (Participant 3, October 14, 2010).*

Immediately after the release there was not a state of equilibrium and one could argue that, again, new coping mechanisms were required. There were new hardships and disorganization that followed the release. Thus more research is clearly needed on women's adjustment post-release.

Of the eight partners who are still incarcerated, the women were fearful of various demons waiting to sabotage their families return to normalcy. One woman worried about restrictions on movement after her partner was released. She had experienced some of the pressure while her husband was out on bail.

> *I worry [about when he comes out] because I know the stress levels that we had before this all happened and because they say he can't go to the park and he can't go here and he can't go there.[while he was on bail] we went to the dentist, we have been going to this dentist for thirty odd years; we didn't know that they have a thing for kids in the fall. We just passed by there. One of the*

> *girls in that office called it in because she didn't want to work on my husband's teeth because she had heard about [his arrest] on the news (Participant 8, October 20 2010).*

Three women worried about the institutionalization of their mate and difficulties with reintegration into society after being incarcerated. Two women mentioned the rigid routine and the transition to more freedom. Also, after a long incarceration, the world is changing so quickly there could be a time warp effect to overcome. Women mentioned changes both in technology (video games and cell phones) and shootings and crime.

Another woman mentioned her partner being angry about the incarceration and worried about how he will handle residual resentment upon release.

> *Well, he is just so angry and so bitter from being in there and he says that he's innocent, which a lot of people say, but I believe him. But being in there if you're innocent is probably worse because… what are you doing in there? So I can hear the bitterness, even when he is trying to be positive. He will have supports when he gets out for sure but how do you go through all that and come out and reintegrate into society? (Participant 6, October 18, 2010).*

Similarly, another woman worried about emotional trauma and wondered how someone would deal with what they see in prison. She mentioned the horrific emotional stress of seeing fights, stabbings and even death within the institution.

Of the eight women whose partners are still incarcerated, two were concerned about the stability of their relationship upon their partner's return but for different reasons. This concern is real, a significant number of marriages do fail following an incarceration (Hannem, 2003). The first woman was concerned about the changes in her partner and whether he would be able to return to his previous self.

> *I am a little bit concerned about our relationship because I don't know about his anger and his frustration, not against me but just in general. I hope he isn't like that every single day and that he doesn't have to go through that every day because I am not sure I can handle that (Participant 6, October 18, 2010).*

Ironically, the second woman was concerned about losing the close communication that they had gained while they were separated. She mentioned that through letters she was able to see the softer side of her partner and to read some of his deepest thoughts. It seemed easier for the couple to communicate when they were writing down their thoughts as opposed to verbally expressing them. This particular woman explained she will be gaining physical contact but be losing an emotional connection.

The most common concern following their partner's release from prison was recidivism to crime. Seven of the eight women whose partners were still incarcerated expressed worry over their partner staying away from crime and were fearful that there would be a lot of pressure to return to crime. When the offences related to drugs the women were particularly apprehensive of the chances of a successful reintegration. This fear is founded in that those who engage in patterns of offences, as opposed to a single impulsive offence, are at greater risk of recidivism (Hannem, 2003).

Most of the women felt that the likelihood of their partner returning to a life of crime was directly related to the likelihood of them finding a job. The women feared that if their partner could not get a job easily they would resort to getting money by illegal means. Having a criminal record hinders the ability for most of them to find a job.

> *I worry if he doesn't find a job because that's what originally got him into this situation. He had moved home from _____ and he had a really hard time finding work because he has a record, so it was really hard to find work…so he resorted to bad habits. That's what I worry about when he does get out, that it might happen again. I am hoping it won't but if he*

> *can't find work he may resort to bad habits again (Participant 9, October 21, 2010).*

Two of the women are going to school and getting an education in order to support their partner when they return in the hopes that by removing the financial burden they are removing the temptation to resort back to a life of crime.

> *It is so important that, if we [as women] are going to be committed to these guys that we get our education and have a legit job. Because, let's be real, when these guys come out here they won't be able to get a legit job because they are going to have a criminal record and they are stigmatized and this is attached to their name. If you are going to be with this guy and have children you have to be able to carry the load. At the end of the day, that's the way it is (Participant 4, October 15, 2010).*

Above are all the realities and fears that women face upon her partners release. Neither the women whose partner's were already released nor those who are not, experienced or had a vision of harmony parallel to a pre incarceration state. It is questionable whether a woman who chooses to stay with her husband during incarceration can return to a stable state until the incarceration period is over. This finding is the most significant because it offers a new perception of crisis as it relates to partners of those who are incarcerated. Although a temporary equilibrium may be attained the final phase remains elusive.

Imprisonment clearly has a negative effect on women who have a male partner incarcerated and the limited support available for this group reiterates their marginalized status in society. These women were burdened with loss of income and extra expenses coupled with stigmatization and emotional pain. Although they had found some ways in which to alleviate some of their stress through professional help, friends and family and

communication with the offender, they still had many fears surrounding their partner's return with indication of another crisis ahead.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I will first provide a summary of findings and outline their significance. The limitations of this research will be addressed along with areas where political action could benefit this marginalized group. Finally, I will discuss suggestions for future research.

Ten semi structured interviews were conducted in order to obtain first hand experiences of women with a male partner who is incarcerated. The interviews asked question about (1) hardships and difficulties that were experienced, (2) coping mechanisms and (3) fears upon release based on Hill's Crisis Theory model. Hill's process has four phases. First there is the stressor event or the initial incarceration. Second is the disorganization phase, at which time the family is experiencing many hardships. Third is coping and recovery and fourth is reorganization.

The results indicate that women with a male partner who is incarcerated experience many difficulties including stigmatization, financial barriers and emotional stresses. The findings provide insight into the difficulties faced by prisoners' partners and effective coping mechanisms. Furthermore, although there were some generalization across nations, for example it is likely that most women with incarcerated partners would feel financial and emotional stress, the differences were noted that are unique to Canadian women.

One of the most prevalent hardships was the impossibility of covering additional expenses with reduced income. These economic difficulties were exacerbated by communication pressures. Visitation was a huge family burden and a lot of time and money was spent on communicating with an inmate. For some families the lack of

information made the entire process more difficult. Once families did get to visit their loved ones they were often stigmatized by the officials and staff within the prison and endured forms of humiliation. This is in addition to stigmatization by the outside world, family and friends. They often felt like they were shouldering some of the responsibilities of their partner's crime. There is the guilt through association, the need to fill the role of liaison between the prisoner and the outside world and, most notably worrying about the offender's physical well being.

The third phase of Hill's theory is coping. Most of the women in this study developed some form of coping mechanism or strategies to pull themselves back together. One of the most obvious and helpful coping mechanisms was support from both friends and family. Professional help and communication with the offender were also successful coping mechanisms.

The women in this study were asked to identify coping mechanisms that would have been helpful had they been available. The most common response was help from organizations to connect with others going through a similar experience. Furthermore, women felt the need for information, financial assistance and programs for their partners.

Unique to this study was the source of financial hardship for Canadian women. In other countries the financial loss was indicated to be a result of the loss of one income. In this study, it was the result of extra spending mainly due to maintaining contact. This difference may be, as stated previously, due to Canada's geographical size and its centralized federal government.

Also distinct in this study was the fourth and final phase – reorganization. The women at this stage are forced to create a new routine in order to achieve a new family

homeostasis. This stage varies from Hill's original model. The women in this study did not return to a homeostatic state. Instead, they predicted that upon release new struggles will develop. The women in this study acknowledged the fact that there will probably be a period of unrest. The transitional period would bring on new stressors, to different degrees, and that the period would be stressful and require work.

In this study two of the partners had been released from prison – one couple is still together and the other has separated. Of those who were not yet released, the women worried about their relationship, institutionalization, being watched by professionals (i.e. probation/parole officer), and their partner returning to a life of crime and struggling to find a job. This thesis supports the idea that women who have a male partner that is incarcerated experience a crisis as defined by Hill's Crisis Theory but only as far as his first three phases. Hill's fourth phase did not hold true for this group.

They were unable to return to a parallel state to that of pre incarceration while their partner was incarcerated and, even after his release, continued to experience initial disorganization. The disorganization and hardship phase may occur several times because when the husband returns home the transitional period brings its own set of stressors to be worked through. The difficulties experienced by these women were not expected to come to an end after the prisoners was released. What awaited them at the end of the incarceration period were new stressors, new coping mechanisms and new adjustment strategies.

There are four notable limitations of this study. First, the sample size is small and thus the results are not generalizable to all women with incarcerated partners. Originally, I had hoped to interview more participants but very few women responded to the ad

posted at Rittenhouse. Cutbacks in programming also made it hard to locate participants. Unfortunately, lack of formal resources for this population complicated the gathering of data. Female participants and organizations that attempted to support them were very difficult to find. However, this study does provide a starting point on which to base future research.

Second, this study is limited to those who were in touch with John Howard Society and/or Rittenhouse. Women who have not sought professional help were excluded. One can speculate that personality types or circumstances may lead a specific group of women to seek this type of help and they may not be representative of the majority of partners.

Third, this study only looked at those who were still in contact with their loved ones and again this might not represent the majority of families. A study examining families who have severed contact would also be informative. Their needs and opinions may be very different than women who continue with their relationship. Given that two of the major difficulties for women had to do with communication and the stigmatization of staying with the offender, the women who have severed ties would likely have different concerns.

Lastly, this research could benefit from a longitudinal study, in order to understand the difficulties during and after the incarceration more clearly. In all but two cases, the women had to guess at what their challenges might be upon release. A longitudinal study would allow the women to give concrete answers regarding what these difficulties were. Furthermore, studying women post release would allow one to examine if women do return to a pre incarceration state and the time length in which this happens.

Nonetheless this study does outline some major concerns for these women and suggests a number of policy implications. This study identifies a need for programs devoted to prisoners' families. The limited help that is available for prisoners' families is provided by not-for-profit organizations. Since the 1960s some family help groups have developed but most are a small group of women meeting together to share their experiences (Codd, 2008). These support groups have proven to be very helpful; offering emotional support, a safe place to talk and information sharing (Codd, 2008). The women in this study reiterated the need for such groups. However, for these groups lack of funding puts limitations on their effectiveness.

Programs should emphasize building family strength and confronting real life problems (Klein, Bartholomew & Hibbert, 2002). Family problems cannot all be subsumed under one category, they are complex and may require more than programs that focus on a single issue (Klein, Bartholomew & Hibbert, 2002). Furthermore, paying attention to the family should come at the beginning, middle and end of the sentence and intervention should be sensitive to the separation and emotional and social difficulties. In implementing more programs there is the potential to reduce family stress and the pain of separation, promote family reunification and help families meet daily needs.

Research demonstrates that ex-inmates who return to stable and functional households find the reintegration process easier and are much less likely to recidivate (Codd, 2007; Shollenberger, 2009). When prisoners are released they experience a number of obstacles, including finding shelter and work, and those who do not face the challenges alone seem to have a better chance of staying out of the system

(Shollenberger, 2009). If they receive encouragement and support during the re-entry process they experience a higher success rate (Codd, 2007).

Specifically, programs should focus on supporting family contact and reducing the financial burden of visitation and phone calls to make the cost of communication less prohibitive. A formal information process is necessary for families to find information about the location of their loved ones and understand the criminal justice system. Also, officials and jail staff should be educated on some of the hardships that families experience in order to reduce humiliation and dehumanizing situations during visitation.

This study is exploratory and only begins to examine what family's experience. Further research is needed in order to bring the issues to the attention of the policy makers and to validate and expand on what is known to date. During my literature review I found very few studies that focused specifically on coping mechanisms and what supportive measures are in place and/or needed for families during the separation. Without understanding the problem we cannot hope to come up with a solution.

This study was opened up to women who had a male partner incarcerated in both the federal and provincial systems. However, during the investigation differences between the two systems emerged. For example women in the federal system had access to a calling card, whereas women in the provincial system only had collect calling options. Furthermore, women whose partners were in the provincial system often did not have to travel as far as those in the federal system. To date there has been no study that has compared the two systems and there effects on a wider scale. However, the differences may require separate policy suggestions

Furthermore, much of the literature that is available focused on women with an incarcerated male partner or children with a parent who is incarcerated in portion due to the overwhelming number of men that are incarcerated in comparison to women. However, there is a need to address other members of society that are affected by incarceration. Would the results be similar for other populations that fall victim to a loved one being incarcerated? In Canada, no study has been conducted on males whose female partners are incarcerated. It can be argued that the relatively small number of federal correctional facilities in Canada designed for women make the travel costs of men involved with female prisoners even more devastating.

The issue of tattooing was mentioned by one woman and, even though it was not main theme is worthy of discussion and further investigation. This woman mentioned the fear of her partner getting a tattoo in prison and contacting a disease. This fear is very real because often needles are shared within prison, both for drug use and tattooing purposes. Rates for HIV and other diseases tend to be much higher in prison than in other populations in part due to the inmates histories of high risk behaviours (Bryan, Robbins, Ruiz & O'Neill, 2006). The rate of AIDS is five times higher in prison than the general population (Krebs, 2002, p.19). Research should investigate how these high rates transfer to partners and families of the incarcerated population if at all.

> *I told him no tattoos in there or anything because I am scared of like diseases and AIDS and all that stuff and you get nervous when they share needles and stuff like that. And even if they say – the needle is clean, don't worry we put it in bleach and all this stuff – still. So I told him if you ever get a tattoo in there, I am gone. (Participant 4, October 15, 2010).*

Another area in need of more research is the reintegration and post release patterns of families. This study discovered a process that differs from other Crisis Theory Models. A longitudinal study or a study conducted solely on the reintegration and reorganization phase is needed to understand the patterns of retuning to a state parallel to pre-incarceration. This research is particularly needed due to the recent emphasis on a tough on crime approach and high incarceration rates with little consideration given to the families of incarcerated individuals. Canada's incarceration rates are relatively high in comparison to many other countries which only magnifies the wider implications of incarceration. Despite this a relatively small amount of research has been conducted on the experiences of women with a partner incarcerated.

Given that there is strong support for the use of family relationships and evidence that family support greatly increases the odds of successful reintegration, we should be addressing the needs of family members who are providing that support. The benefits derived from programs geared towards helping prisoner's families are immeasurable. Perhaps, if concentrated effort was made towards prison system reform partners could be viewed as a viable resource instead of treated as an afterthought. The following quote encapsulates the pain and difficulty many women with incarcerated partners must learn to cope with:

> *"We prisoners' wives lead a double life. Nowhere are we free, not within the prison walls with our husbands, not outside in the free society. I can only shake my head in wonder as to how we survive it all – the emotional and financial burdens, stress on our marriages, and undermining of our self-esteem. Well, here I am, here's my exit off the Highway. […] I park my car, walk toward the prison, see my friends, and wave. I am home for the next 12 hours, living out my married life within the boundaries of the prison walls – knowing that love can unlock at least one door."* (Girshick, 1996, p.5)

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Appendix A

Any information you tell me is confidential. If there are any questions you do not want to answer or subject matter you do not want to talk about that is fine. You can decide at any time you do not want to answer a question or that you no longer want to participate in the interview

I am going to ask you a series of questions about what has been stressful, since your partner has been away from you and your children. I am going to begin by asking general questions about yourself and your partner. I will be asking you information about your age, racial background, employment, etc. Again, any time you feel uncomfortable you may stop the interview or choose not to answer a question. I am going to type notes as well as use an audio tape during the interview is that okay?

Demographics

1. How old are you?
2. How would you describe your racial background? (i.e. Would you consider yourself black, white, etc....)
3. How far have you gone in school?
4. Do you have a job?
5. Who do you live with right now?

Relationship

6. How far did your partner go in school?
7. Did he have a job?
8. Were you living with your partner prior to incarceration?

9. What is your relationship with your partner? (i.e. do you consider yourself married, single, dating…..)
10. Do you have children? How old are they?

Now, I am going to ask you about the incarceration and difficulties that you have experienced. Remember that any question you do not want to answer is fine.

Phase 1: Stressor

11. How long has your partner been in prison?
12. Why is he there?
13. When do you think he will get out?

Phase 2: Financial

14. How has your life changed since your partner has gone to prison?

Phase 2: Visitation

15. Has getting to see/talk to your partner been an issue?

Phase 2: Stigmatization

16. What has the reaction to incarceration been? (i.e. from your family, community…..)

Phase 2: Children

17. How do you think your partner's incarceration has impacted your kids?

Phase 3: Coping

18. Do you find it stressful?
19. Is there anywhere you could/did go for help?
20. Where do you think you could use the biggest help?

Phase 4: Readjustment

21. What has been the most successful way of coping?
22. Are there any worries regarding your partner's return?

Appendix B

The Experience of Male Prisoners' Partners University of Ontario Institute of Technology Criminology, Justice & Policy Studies

I am conducting research on the experiences of male prisoners' partners and would like to invite you to participate in my research study. The purpose of the study is to identify difficulties that women face as a consequence of their partner's incarceration as well as coping mechanisms that were useful and coping mechanisms that may have been useful had they been available.

As a participant, you will be asked to partake in an interview that could range between 30 minutes – a little over an hour. An interview will be conducted at a time that best suits you. If you agree to participate, you may decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer and all information you provide will be considered confidential Furthermore, you will not be identified by name in any thesis, report or publication resulting from this study.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

If after receiving this letter, you have any questions about this study, or would like to volunteer please contact me at katiebruynson1@msn.com.

In appreciation for you time, you will receive $20.00.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Bruynson
University of Ontario Institute of Technology
Faculty of Criminology, Justice and Policy Studies

Appendix C

Earn $20.00!

I am from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and am conducting a study on the experiences of male prisoners' partners.

I am interested in speaking with you about your experiences during the incarceration of your partner.

If you are female and have a male partner who is incarcerated I would like to interview you.

The study is voluntary. It is also anonymous and any information you share with me will be kept confidential.

For more information about this study or to volunteer for this study please contact Kathryn Bruynson at katiebruynson1@msn.com or 905-809-3154.

Appendix D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Study Name: The Experiences of Male Prisoners' Partners
(REB # 09-129)

Principal Investigator:
Kathryn Bruynson, B.A
katiebruynson1@msn.com

Research Advisor:
Professor Carla Cesaroni, PhD
Carla.Cesaroni@uoit.ca

University of Ontario Institute of Technology
(905) 721-3111 Ext. 2517 (Dr Cesaroni) or (905)721-8668 (Research Services)

- ☐ I understand that the information I provide will be used to further understand the issues experienced by families when a family member is incarcerated.
- ☐ I understand that my interview will take 30 to 60 minutes.
- ☐ I understand that if there is anything I don't understand during the interview, I may ask the interviewer to stop and explain it.
- ☐ I understand that what we are doing today is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.
- ☐ I understand that I don't have to do this interview if I don't want to. I am doing it because I want to, not because someone made me.
- ☐ I understand that the data collected, which can consist of handwritten notes, typed notes, typed transcriptions, and tape recordings, will be kept in a secure manner and will be destroyed after it is transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that whatever I tell the interviewer will not be shared with anyone unless there is legal requirement i.e. in the case of reported child abuse.
- ☐ I understand that my confidentiality will be continually protected throughout the research process, and until all documents are destroyed.
- ☐ I understand that I will be asked to provide the researchers with personal information and feelings, so long as I am comfortable discussing the information they wish to talk about.
- ☐ I understand that talking about my experience creates a risk that certain feelings may arise and that, if at anytime I wish to speak to a counselor, I will be put in contact with the head counselor of Rittenhouse.
- ☐ I understand that if I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal can be removed.

☐ I understand that once all the interviews are completed, the information will be grouped together so that no one can be identified. This information will be stored in a secure place at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. Only the principal investigator, Kathryn Bruynson, will have access to it.

☐ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer any questions I choose. The interviewer will not be upset if I choose to do these things.

☐ I understand that if at any time I have any questions about the study, I can call the interviewer at the above number.

☐ I understand that if I wish to see the results of this study I can contact the researcher or Rittenhouse.

☐ I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

☐ I understand that if I choose to withdraw I will get $20.00 for doing this interview. I understand that if I chose not to finish the interview I will still receive the $20.00.

☐ I understand that the article produced by this study may be published, but any identifying and specific information will not be published.

☐ I understand that I should feel free to talk about any aspect of this interview.

If you have any concerns regarding your rights as a participant, please contact the Ethics and Compliance Officer at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology at compliance@uoit.ca or call 905 721 8668 ext 3693. The file number for this project is 09-129

Date: ----------

(Signature of participant)_____

Date: ----------

(Signature of researcher)_____